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The Unquiet Sex

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...LIFORNIA

BY

Helen Watterson Moody

...LIFORNIA
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New York
Charles Scribner's Sons
1898

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Charles Scribner's Sons

TROW DIRECTORY
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY
NEW YORK

To

KATE AND A. B.

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PREFACE

THIS little book, for men, women, and the Unquiet Sex, is written with no thought of preferring charges against any class of persons or estate of being, still less is it intended to set forth any comprehensive treatment of the duties and privileges of women in the hurried and perplexing present. I have desired simply to offer a presentation of a single phase—a passing one, let us hope—in the affairs of women; a phase to which many of us have been too busy, perhaps, to give its full share of consideration.

This singleness of purpose has, not unnaturally, involved a limitation in the

point of view; and since this was intended, I trust it will not be reckoned against my fairness of judgment. Doubtless there is much to be said in rejoinder, and each reader will be able to comment for himself or herself in passing.

My thanks are due the editor of the FORUM *for his courtesy in permitting me to include "The Evolution of 'Woman,'" published under another title in the* FORUM *of September, 1893.*

H. W. M.

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THE WOMAN COLLEGIAN

THE WOMAN COLLEGIAN

THE woman collegian, both as a graduate and an undergraduate, is a very serious young person. So is her brother, but he is serious about different things. As an undergraduate he takes his fraternities and his societies and his clubs and his Alma Mater's record in athletics with great gravity; he takes his particular college very hard indeed; he is a Yale or a Cornell or a Harvard man, and that is about all there is of him for the first year after graduation. Then he gets over it. But his sister thinks more of her education than she does of her college, and her choice of electives is of more importance to her than her choice of societies. When she gets out of school, even after several years—after her brother has digested all his importance as a collegian

As Tom and his sister take it.

and thinks only of his college training as a good thing to have had in order that he might know how secondary was its value, after all, except to set him on an easy level with other fellows, and give him an occasional interest in athletics, and put him into a university club—the woman collegian does not succeed in sloughing off her scholastic habits of thought. She goes in for serious reforms and post-graduate knowledge. She has convictions beyond her unschooled sister, and is, even yet, caught writing papers on the careers of college women, and listening while others discourse upon what college women owe the world. All this makes her a trifle *posée*, over-assertive, too conscious of herself and her type. Thus she has attracted to herself a certain interest, which she must not mistake for entire admiration, as one may get the attention of a drawing-room by an awkward and self-conscious entrance. Her learning is distinctly an acquirement and not a part of herself, and not infrequently fits her badly, like a suit of ready-made clothes. It is still customary, even

The woman collegian has not yet recovered from her education.

in polite circles, to make distinct mention of collegiate advantages whenever a young woman is present who has been fortunate enough to enjoy them, in order that the unwary stranger may have his cue. While everything in Tom's life after Harvard is calculated to take the nonsense out of him and put the man collegian on a level with the rest of us, everything in Harriet's life, in college and out of it, marks her as one set apart. And all this after thirty years of college training for women, and with thousands of women graduates, whose lives and achievements bear witness to the fact that a woman may undertake the utmost severities of what is still politely known as the "higher" education, without giving the least indication then or thereafter of remarkable ability of any kind.

"And a very good thing it is, too," as Mr. Punch says in answer to the sentiment, "There's no place like home." It would be sad, indeed, if a young woman who asks no more than the indifferent equipment for life that a college training gives should be

made to pay the penalty of extraordinariness therefor, when to be ordinary is so much more wholesome for the individual and so much more desirable for the world in general.

Some reasons why Harriet is over-serious.

There are several reasons why this unfortunate solemnity has attached itself to Harriet's education, some of which will be easily dissipated, no doubt, as the results of education inhere in the physical and mental constitution of women. When one's grandmother is known to have been a bachelor of the liberal arts, a master's degree for the fourth descendant is a matter of simple assumption. But some of these reasons will not disappear until certain defects in the college training for women shall have been remedied. I suppose we all agree that the ideal education for women cannot result from segregating them, since the segregation of either sex is sure to result in intensifying its peculiarities. Women, as a sex, are disposed to take things too seriously, and to dissipate vital force in that nervous debauch known as worrying. Ten women shut in

together will worry one hundred times as much as ten men shut in together, and especially is this true when the women are in that unstable equilibrium of the emotions which goes with youth. So, also, a hundred women shut in together will exhaust themselves, presently, merely by being together, the sensitive temperaments eating into each other like corrosive acids. The housing of hundreds of girls in large dormitories, with a common sitting-room for three or four girls, is wholly inadequate to the needs of human nature, and some day some wise woman with money to spend for the better education of women (which is not necessarily the higher education) will build the ideal home for women students, in which there shall be no more than a dozen girls, each of whom shall have a suite of rooms altogether her own, into which she may shut herself as she wills for the solitude which is so necessary alike to the health of the soul and the body, and which, more than anything else, relieves the nervous tension brought about by the action and reaction of

Health of soul and body demand solitude.

one personality upon another. Meantime I wish it were possible for some college president to try the experiment of requiring each woman student to spend one or two hours of each day absolutely alone and relaxed, that the whirling mind and quivering nerves might hush themselves in the blessedness of silence and seclusion. Such quiet insistence upon the individual life would do much toward a correction of the common and not unnatural tendency among these segregated and unstable young women to lavish themselves in extravagant friendships with each other, and very often, also, in excessive and emotional admiration for some teacher, whose personal magnetism is thus made to bring tribute to her egotism and vanity. The wisest and most helpful teacher is not the one whom the girls themselves "rave over" and find most "magnetic." It is she who carefully avoids the appeal to the emotions, and who, without repelling the affections, knows how to check hysterical excess and keep the young nature cool and steady by a delicate reserve and a gentle de-

cision at the first indication of need. It is a curious fact in psychology—or is it physiology?—that while hero-worship is a good thing for a boy, it is seldom a good thing for a girl.

Why is hero-worship good for boys and not good for girls?

It is declared, by those who have had the opportunity of judging, that one of the advantages of co-education is a distinct lessening of the emotional and nervous strain among the women students. Just why the presence of men as teachers and fellow-pupils should have both a quieting and a tonic effect upon women, I leave it for others wiser than myself to explain, but there is certainly less nervous tension, morbidity, and self-consciousness among college women associated with men than among those in the women's colleges, even though there is also to be found an occasional instance of that exclusive love between a man and a woman, which will spring up sometimes even in the arid soil of the higher education. To many persons this last is a most undesirable state of affairs, and it is usually considered one of the strongest arguments against co-education.

It is a fact that boys and girls in college do sometimes fall in love, and sometimes they marry, though oftener they both fall well out of it before their first year of separation is past. Of course falling in love "takes their minds off their books," in the phrase of the anxious parent, but love is a distraction whenever it occurs, and it is hard to believe that there can be granted a more fortunate opportunity for indulging in so engrossing an experience than the seclusion and serenity of college life. I should call those two young persons exceptionally blest by fortune who get their falling in love satisfactorily accomplished before graduation, in the "little, bubbling back-water of the quadrangle." There is no handicap to business, later on, so heavy as love and the pursuit of the loved one, as any man who has borne its burden in the heat of the day can testify.

Is falling in love an entire misfortune?

Nor is the value of a tender experience of this kind in early youth to be despised in casting up the sum of the educative forces in college life. Aside from the general humanizing effect it is sure to have on the young

male animal, such an affair usually results in opening up to him a whole new world of intellectual perceptions. The objective world, which was his so long, suddenly grows dim. He learns, probably for the first time, the value of introspection, the uses of poetry, the joys of melancholy, the possibility—nay, the potency—of quite another point of view than his own. After one has been years out of college he not infrequently looks back, to find that the influences most potent and helpful, and sweetest to remember, were, not the triumphs in the class-room, the struggles in the debating-society, the slow acquirement of random and unprofitable fact, but the touch of arm in arm on the college campus, the "simmerings of thought and heart at the hearth-stone of a friend," and perhaps also the sophomore love that was so awakening, so delicate, so deep, and so short-lived!

Its place in the general education of the human male.

Just what should be the ideal education for women, is, and must be, an unsettled question for some time to come. For it is still undetermined how distinctly the area of

We have not yet settled upon the ideal education for women,

woman's needs and activities should be bounded by sex-limitations, and how largely it may be identified with the needs and activities of men. This conclusion, when it comes, will be deduced, not from tradition or ambition, nor from personal prejudice, but from science, through the things biology and physiology and sociology have yet to find out about this serious matter of sex. We have lately been told by a man with a microscope that a division of labor upon the lines of sex is distinctly marked as far down in the animal world as the sponges. If this be true, it would seem that no system of education for human beings can be comprehensive and satisfactory, which leaves out of account this first dividing principle. For thirty years now we have been exploiting a higher education for women, based on what has been called the rational principle, that there is no sex in mind ; and yet, as a matter of fact, the idea of sex has not for an hour been lost sight of. The education of women has still proceeded along the lines of sex—the other sex. A strenuous insistence in the

Because we are still educating them upon the lines of sex,

women's colleges that the curricula should be as nearly as possible identical with those of men, the constant and jealous watch kept on the comparative standings of young men and women in examinations, and (where the desire to keep up the masculine standards has been lost sight of) the in-breeding and intensifying of sex-peculiarities, through desire to remain womanly, though educated—if all these be not the indices of the sex idea in education, one knows not, indeed, where to look for them.

But even more significant of the persistency and power of this underlying thought has been the result of the higher education, as expressed in the immediate desire of the young woman, upon graduation, to stake out for herself a career in the world, to do something that shall be noticeable if not notable, with an idea of proving to the world that she can do a man's work as well as a man, displaying no prepossession whatever in favor of doing a woman's work as well as a woman can do it. The higher education of women without reference to

And it has made them dissatisfied with their own work.

sex seems, thus far, to have resulted greatly in the glorification of men and men's work, and in dissatisfaction with women and women's work—which is the most logical thing in the world, and quite to be expected, so long as we insist upon ignoring certain simple, radical, dignified distinctions between the sexes. I hasten to say with the introduction of this threadbare and somewhat bedraggled phrase, that such sex distinctions as I have in mind have nothing to do with any childish and uneasy comparison of the relative endowment of the sexes—that can surely be trusted to take care of itself and to expound itself fully with time and a little judicious negligence. But, as things are at present, with half the capable women of the world doing the work of men, and the other half wishing they could do it, while the whole economic situation is upset by the thousands of unfortunate incapables who are only trying to earn a temporary and unlucky living until they can marry into a better one, there seems to be a desperate need of some serviceable division of labor along the lines

Why we need a sex-division in work.

of sex. And since it is to be devoutly hoped and expected that the greater part of our college girls will not be educated or co-educated out of the good old fashion of marrying, and taking up thereafter the noble profession of housewifery, it would appear to be practicable and sensible to make such a sex-division with some reference to the special and particular knowledge she will need in her life's work, just as one puts a boy into the School of Mines to fit him for a civil engineer, or into the laboratory to make a chemist of him. For the day has gone by when the profession of the housewife may be considered an affair of enthusiasm and inspiration alone. It has come to be suspected, even by the non-participating sex, that its capable conduct demands a knowledge of all the learned professions and all the unlearned trades, of most of the liberal arts, and the exact and inexact sciences—physical, mental, and moral. Therefore, one must feel that the most hopeful and helpful movement in the entire education of women is the establishment in some of the women's

Why not educate a woman for her life-work?

colleges of courses in domestic science or household economics.

I know the argument to the contrary; I used to write about it myself, and believe it, too; but that was before the serious days settled down upon me, when I would gladly have exchanged my small birthright of Latin and Greek for the ability to make one single, respectable mess of anything half so good as pottage. The argument is, of course, that, given a certain amount of intellectual discipline and general training, the young woman will absorb easily enough such special facts as she needs when the time of their usefulness comes. But facts, you see, are apt to be solid things; you cannot absorb them; you must work them over into something else first—to change the figure, you must masticate them, and digest them, and make them a very part of your bone and tissue before they can be of much service to you. And this is not to be done when a sudden emergency arises. One needs something more than facts; one needs that last product known as a knowledge of facts, in the pro-

The necessity for something more than facts.

fession of the housewife and in the presence of the cook.

A college preparation for this profession is by no means to be interpreted as any distasteful and indelicate preparation for the privileges and duties of an estate toward which the young girl has not, as yet, the slightest inclination. It is rather a simple and dignified recognition of the sociological fact that women and the home and all the social institutions that spring from it, are interdependent, and that, whether we are willing as yet to admit it or not, the natural and simple division of human labor is the one that assigns to women the duties and activities that centre around the hearth. The first division of human labor was undoubtedly one of sex in those days when Primitive Man went out hunting, fishing, or fighting, while his primitive wife stayed by the fire to keep it bright against his return, and to develop such rude industries as grew out of his needs and her ingenuity; and I make so bold as to say, though "with trembling pen," as Mr. Zangwill says, that I have never been able

Women were the first home-makers and fire-tenders.

to see why women should quarrel with this division of human labor, or feel crestfallen over it. Either it was accidental—in which case nothing derogatory either to women or their ability is assumed, much less proved—or else it sprang from causes so deep as to reach down and enwrap the very roots of human nature and the first conditions of human society; and then there is no use in being disturbed about it, because there is no chance of altering it. Nothing is so unchangeable as those instincts and convictions which lie at the base of human nature to keep the foundations of human life steady and secure. It would be sad, indeed, if the present struggle against sex limitations should prove to be a quarrel with the nature of things, for, as Mr. Lowell once said, "whoever wittingly or unwittingly quarrels with the nature of things is certain in the long run to get the worst of it."

Why struggle with the nature of things?

The health of the college woman leaves something to be desired. But it is Americanitis rather than the college education

that is to blame. Americanitis may be defined as the desire to "get on," regardless of everything else. It is Americanitis that prompts the farmer's daughter to get a college education and make opportunities for herself better than those her mother and father had before her. Therefore she goes to a small college, in a small town, with a preparatory department attached, where she often begins her education as a "junior prep." She furnishes a single room in which she, and even a room-mate, study, sleep, eat, make their clothes, and sometimes do their laundering. She keeps up in her studies, joins a choral class, a literary society, and the Young Women's Christian Association; goes to chapel once a day and twice on Sunday—and very often falls in love and "gets engaged" besides. At the beginning of her senior year she breaks down. She ought to. It's the very least she can do out of respect to herself as a human being.

Americanitis and the health of the college woman.

The situation is but little changed in the larger and richer colleges, where the great

Her education means too much to her.

proportion of the undergraduates are poor girls, the daughters of clergymen, or missionaries, or business men in moderate circumstances; girls to whom their education is the means to an end, bread and butter and bonnets for themselves, certainly, and perhaps a college education for a younger brother or sister. Once in college, an ambitious girl is sure to get into a swim of things she wants to do. Besides the fifteen to twenty recitations a week, without which her craving for knowledge cannot be satisfied, she finds a world of smaller interests, with which she seriously identifies herself or as seriously lets alone. There are the Philolethians or the Idlers, and the Colonial Dances and the concerts and The Shakespeare Club, and the lectures, and the many complexities of new thoughts and new personal relations, all of which this tense young woman wishes to take at a gulp, as Great Opportunities of life, and with a solemnity that defeats their very end. This is perhaps not unnatural, while so many of our American girls have still to seek their

culture elsewhere than in their own homes, the while they are still too young to realize that not what they acquire, but what they enjoy, is at once the test and the measure of their culture.

Co-ordinate with Americanitis as interfering with the health of the undergraduate, is her inheritance of what I should like to call, if nobody objects, Johncalvinitis—meaning that contempt for the body, which is, let us hope, the last outcropping of those old Puritan ancestors of ours, who prayed as if they had lost their souls, and ate as if they had lost their bodies. To too many American women, and especially to those who have hard work of any kind in hand, eating is a concession to the flesh which is paid grudgingly, deprecatingly, and with as much haste and as little thought as possible. I have watched the undergraduate eat, and she eats badly. She chooses her food apparently from pure caprice or from a personal idiosyncrasy that ought to be reformed. Doubtless she knows very well, having learned it in the laboratory, that proper nu-

Johncalvinitis and its contempt for the body.

trition is secured only by the combination of certain food substances in certain proportions; she knows the use in the body of protein, fats, and carbohydrates; nevertheless, she makes her luncheon of bread-and-butter and tea and pie, if she feels like it, and her dinner of a soup and a salad. There is still much to be done, you see, in educating the gustatory instincts of the college woman, as undoubtedly there is still room for improvement in the composition and preparation of the daily bills of fare set before the girls even in our largest and richest colleges.

The neglected education of her palate.

When to the elemental education in cookery which the ideal college for women is going to supply, there is established, also, a chair of gastronomy for the education of the American palate and the elevation of the American mind to an appreciation of the dignity of cooking as a science and of eating as a fine art, we shall, perhaps, understand that the ability to detect with appreciation the subtle blending of an exquisite sauce or salad, and the power to make a

harmonious composition of companionable savors in a single meal, is as distinctly a result and a test of culture as the appreciation of the eye in painting or of the ear in music; while the ability to set forth a suave and delicate dish as the product of one's own skill, possibly contributes as much to the sum of good in the world as a moderately bad translation of a German pessimist, or even a new manifestation in philanthropic possibilities. Supposing, for a moment, that the coming century were to have in it the seeds of a new Carlyle, it might be considered a service to mankind if some college woman could contrive to give us the philosopher without the dyspepsia.

The college woman does not love "gym."

The attitude toward athletics of the average woman-undergraduate is usually misunderstood. The Sunday illustrated papers to the contrary, very few college women live in golf-clothes or sweaters, or wear snow-shoes to recitations. On the contrary, most of them detest "gym.," and evade its practice whenever they can, by any allegation of

physical infirmity or other necessity. Too often, their sole concession to the needs of their young muscles is a long walk, at infrequent intervals, with another girl, while the two talk about their worries, or their college work, or their present needs, or their future purposes. The question of physical exercise is, as any college president knows, one of the most perplexing in the college life; its necessity is so fundamental, and its accomplishment so unsatisfactory. And yet there is something too natural and spontaneous in the rebellion against the gymnasium, to admit of the reproof that prudence suggests. It would seem as though the young women have discovered instinctively for themselves that, at its best, a splendidly equipped gymnasium is only a substitute for the real thing, and that its purpose has to do with pathology rather than physiology. The true physical exercise is unconscious of self-improvement as its purpose or end; it is pure overflow. The gymnasium is for those who train with purpose and with effort, but the ideal exercise is not work, it is the

And it is not altogether to her discredit.

muscles playing. However, as things are now, with the forlorn inheritance of overworked nerves and underworked muscles which the average American girl brings into the world with her, the gymnasium is a necessary remedial agent. Some day, it is to be hoped, we shall enter upon a physical estate wherein we can take the open world for a place in which to play; but until that day comes, until the entail has accumulated for several generations, let us still agree to be tolerant of the gymnasium as a distinct means of grace and growth, both literally and figuratively.

The sad case of the twentieth girl,

There is nothing to be regretted in the fact that nineteen out of twenty young women who graduate from college take up at once some means of earning a livelihood. The twentieth girl, who does not, is the one to be pitied. It is not easy to say which is the harder to bear with equanimity and philosophy: the postponements of youth or the disillusionments of middle age. Perhaps we pay too great consideration to what has been

called "the decline in animal heat," and too little to the demands of leaping young blood, in whose red corpuscles inheres the necessity for instant declaration and activity. Thus it is that the twentieth girl often finds her first year out of college the hardest one in her life. After four years of definite routine work in the "sweet serenity of books," with like-minded friends to give zest to labor and rest to recreation, she now finds herself in a world with which she has grown strangely out of touch. The home-life has become adjusted to her absence, and, much to her surprise, goes on smoothly without her. Some of the girls who were her friends before her college days are already married, and some hopefully engaged; she finds young men not enthusiastically prepossessed in favor of the woman collegian, and, anyway, the circles of intimacy are already established, and she stands quite outside. She must begin her social life all over and on a different plane of taste. Meantime, with noble ambitions, but with unformed purposes and undirected powers, she longs mightily for something

definite and worthy on which to expend herself, and this she usually fancies lies outside the home; for she is not yet wise, and her philosophy of life is not final, therefore she does not see, as it is to be hoped she will later on, that the richness and rewards of a woman's life have nothing to do with that Gospel of Ambition of which she has possibly heard too much.

Whose philosophy of life is not final.

Therefore, if the young woman graduate have any desire at all for activity outside the home, she will be much happier and healthier and better satisfied with herself, if she can win the consent of a doubting father or an over-tender mother to let her go about it at once. The mere fact that her father possesses a competence and is perfectly willing to continue her support need not weigh against her wishes. There are other necessities than dollar ones. If the girl has right royal good sense, there will, in time, develop in her character areas of wisdom, and she will come back all the more contented, after her little fling in the busy world, to marry some wisely chosen and fortunate young man, or to com-

Let her work in any way she chooses.

fort her father and mother in their declining years, and hold her sway in the home, well sunned and ripened by her added experience. Besides, there is always the chance that she may develop real talent for the work she has undertaken, and, distancing her brothers in the race for fame, become herself the family pride and prodigy.

Some of the activities and professions of college women.

Usually a baker's dozen or more of the nineteen graduates who must work drift into teaching. Not that they specially like it, or feel their ability to shine as educators, but because it is the work that lies closest to the traditions and interests of the college life, and because it is still the one profession into which the door swings most easily for women. Hundreds of college-bred women have been, and are, more or less capably and efficiently engaged in teaching, and a few have gained a certain distinction as presidents and professors in colleges for women, but no great and original educator has come from among them. Occasionally a determined young graduate gets a foothold in

a newspaper office, and usually keeps it with credit to herself and her higher education, yet the few women editors of eminence have not been college bred, and there is nothing to be gained by concealing the fact that the college women who have undertaken journalism seem, as yet, to have had no influence in sweetening the flood of sensational and nasty print for which the newspaper women of the country must bear their share of discredit with the newspaper men.

The number of college women who have taken up medicine is considerable, some of them no doubt from a real love of science, and some for love of a career. While their work has been able and their success undoubted, it is just to say that they have not contributed originally to medical science. There are a few women collegians in law, in literature, in the pulpit, and in other professions, and their helpfulness and enthusiasm have been especially noticeable in educational and philanthropic work; they have done much to promote University Extension, in the upbuilding—not to say the uplifting

—of the public schools, while in the college settlements, the free kindergartens, and the gracious charities that spring therefrom their tact and courage have been unerring and undaunted. In all these fields of usefulness, the work of college women, "taken by and large," has been good, honest, competent work, about like that of the average industrious man, but it is fair to say that it has been derivative, not creative, complemental, not brilliant, offering little opportunity for sex celebration on the part of those enthusiasts who have believed that women have needed only a diploma and a ballot to be entirely equipped for conquering all the world that men have left unconquered.

Their charities and philanthropies.

The most notable work undertaken by college women in thirty years of opportunity is one which is still in its infancy, but which developed, will do more for that emancipation for which believers sigh, than all the legislation of men and all the oratory of women. In the chemistry of foods, the science of nutrition, the sanitation of the house, the economics of the home, their

The most notable work they have undertaken.

work has been both original and thoroughly scientific. It has not only added something to science, but has opened up certain new departments in special sciences. That the one original contribution of college women to the thought of the world should be along these lines, is pleasing and significant, for it puts the most efficient work of the educated woman in the same category with the most efficient work of all other women — with those humanizing and conserving and elaborating forces which add content and extent to life, and which are—when shall we be satisfied to learn it?—just as fundamentally important, just as dignified, and (if we must also be heroic) just as difficult, as the constructive and creative forces. Perhaps, also, the suspicion is to be deduced that women are contributing most helpfully to the world when they are willing to develop those abilities and possibilities with which custom, or prejudice, or nature—call it what you will—has made them most familiar; when they are not working in the direction of greatest resistance; when they are not pulling upstream.

The value of working with the current.

Be that as it may, it hardly seems that the achievements of the college woman are as yet remarkable enough to cause men to sit uneasily upon their thrones, or to fear that they will be asked for some time to come to step down and take off their crowns. The college woman has justified herself by being hopefully "average" after all. The education she wanted she has had; it was right and just that she should have it, and it has done her good. Possibly it will do her still more good, when she is able to forget it, or if she must remember it, if she can realize that, in having it, she is to-day no farther ahead of the rest of the world than her mother was, twenty-five years ago, when she carried home in triumph the diploma of the academy or the high-school where she had finished her education.

WOMEN'S CLUBS

WOMEN'S CLUBS

ERNESTA tells me much of what I know about women's clubs. Ernesta is my intellectual other half, who as to her own sex, hopeth all things, believeth all things, and as to myself certainly rounds out the Scripture by bearing all things, and enduring all things. She and I never really agree on any subject whatever of intellectual import, but each seems always about to convince the other. This lends continual enchantment to an otherwise hopeless situation. Ernesta is particularly fond of women's clubs, and belongs to many. One club meets to read papers, on Tuesdays at noon, and another meets on Fridays at four. She is a member of a woman's political league, a college association, a health club, is chairman of two philanthropic societies, raises money

Why Ernesta's ideas are better than mine.

for a hotel for working-women, and holds a class for the study of Bach's fugues every Saturday in her own drawing-room. I belong to no clubs whatever; from which it is readily to be seen that her opinions on the subject are much more valuable than my own. I asked Ernesta the other day to define a woman's club, to give the club idea feminine, in as few words as possible. She thought profoundly for some minutes, then said, "A woman's club is an association for the purposes of mutual helpfulness and self-improvement."

A woman's definition of a woman's club.

"But you have luncheon, don't you?" I asked.

"Sometimes," she answered, and her voice had a deprecating note. "But then, you know, we should have to eat anyway; if we eat then, there is just so much time saved, and we can keep on with the discussion."

Then she went on to tell me about a certain club called the "Luncheon Club," whose inspiring purpose it is to combine the pleasures of the intellect with the duties of the palate, by meeting once a fortnight at

luncheon for the discussion of questions of the day—political, scientific, sociological, religious, revolutionary—whatever is exciting the alert public mind at the hour—nay, at the moment. The purpose of the Luncheon Club is entirely ambitious; the luncheon merely a concession to human weakness, ingeniously contrived so as to yield a maximum of return in knowledge — and dyspepsia. Ernesta regretted that she was unable to join this club, by reason of a non-lunching club which met on the same day—through no mean desire of the luncheon, mind you, but merely because the scheme recommended itself to her as converting a lowering but necessary function into a higher intellectual force—lunch-power into thought-power, as it were.

A man's definition of a man's club.

Then I asked a man to define a man's club. "Well," he said, upon reflection, "a club is something you join in order that you may stay away from it when you like."

"*I?*" said I. "Oh, no, I don't, dear sir. I am a woman, if you please. I should be fined if I stayed away."

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"From a woman's club, do you mean?" he asked. "Well, that's very queer. Fancy a man's being fined for not going to his club!" And this seemed both to amuse and instruct him so deeply that he forgot all about me, and smoked two pipefuls before he got around to saying again, "Fancy a man's being fined for not going to his club!"

The national organization of women's clubs.

Ernesta tells me that one million women in this country are members of clubs, and that these million women are joined in one gigantic association called the General Federation, composed of about five hundred individual clubs, representing nearly every State, and that each State has also its smaller organization known as the State Federation. Besides the regular meetings of the single local clubs, both Federations have their own meetings, the smaller ones annually and the large one biennially. This federating movement is, she tells me, eight years old and began, as did the club idea among women, with Sorosis of New York City. The purpose of all these clubs is earnest. Some of

them are for study, some for action, but all are for making of woman "a practical power in the great movements that are directing the world," and for giving her the ability to serve "the highly developed and complex civilization that is awaiting her influence and stands sorely in need of her assistance," to quote the words of the honored president of the General Federation.

Well, unrepressed mental activity with a purpose is better than unrepressed activity without any purpose at all, and certainly here is a high aim and a generous intent with which it seems ungracious enough to quarrel. But it would appear to be the part of ordinary prudence that, before undertaking so large a mission as is outlined here, the one million women who are pledged to it should sit down together and talk it over with some idea of finding out what it is going to cost them to "serve this highly developed and complex civilization," and where they are likely to be landed when the work is done.

A simple matter of prudence.

For the sake of the argument, I am taking for granted here certain premises which

I think might fairly be disputed. There seems to be a unanimous opinion among women to-day that the influence of their sex has never before been so potent and so needed. This much is certainly true, that never before has so much been said about woman's place and mission in the universe. Yet there are some of us who believe that modern research—historical, scientific, and sociological—has set forth no one set of facts with more seriousness and more emphasis than this, that the contribution of the women of all past time to the culture and civilization of the race has always been equal in importance and dignity to that of men; indeed, there are not a few—and strangely enough, most of them are men—who say that it has been greater, and that all the social, and nearly all the religious, fabrics of the world are built around women. Mr. Robert Grant has recently said that women seem to "fancy themselves very much at present, and spend considerable time in studying the set of their minds in the glass." And, to be honest, I fear we are in no position to resent

Are women of more importance to the world just now than ever before?

the charge. I fear we are in great danger of taking ourselves and our achievements with more seriousness than their value warrants. No doubt we are doing well as a sex, if ambition and ambulation and heroism and hurry count for anything, and there is certainly no doubt that we are doing too much. But there are still a few conservatives left among us who are by no means sure that the aspirations of the leaders among women today, coincide with the highest interests of the sex and the greatest general good.

All these assumptions of latter-day superiority on the part of women and of its serious value to the race, is, as I have said, fair ground for dispute; but let us assume that women are really exerting a wider and a higher influence just now than ever before, and that the world still needs and calls for more. Then the reason for this tremendous organizing impulse appears at once. Given a work to do, or only the idea of a work to do, and organization of some kind is inevitable. This is the hour of the convention, the congress, the mass-meeting. We think in by-laws and act

We think in by-laws and act in resolutions.

in resolutions. Man or woman, there is no way but that of unanimity, even to the accomplishment of the most personal and private virtues. That women should resolve themselves into clubs and declare themselves in constitutions upon the slightest provocation is only to be expected. And if women were intended ultimately to play the title-rôles in the big drama of civilization I suppose the grave, earnest, strenuous note of the woman's club is the necessary prelude. But this seems to me very sad, because it clearly indicates that women are likely to have no easier time of it in the future than they claim to have had in the past. One of the indictments oftenest brought up by women out of that anthropological past which would seem to be little enough to their credit as creatures of superior endowment, is that men have persistently taken unto themselves most of the good things of life, leaving to women the particularly unpleasing and obscure and unrewarded labors. No doubt there is some truth in this, and there would be something to reprobate in it if men had

An indictment against man.

thus misbehaved with conscious intent, instead of being, like women themselves, the somewhat helpless creatures of civilizing forces that were stronger than they.

The most serviceable and misused person in history.

I have always had a deal of sympathy for that serviceable, hard-worked, abused, and despised creature known in the deductions of ingenious historians—and women—as Primitive Man—that person at whose doors were first laid all the charges from which his unhappy male descendants have since suffered. He was big, he was brutish and warlike, and his only tastes were for slaying and stealing. He preyed upon mankind openly, and in his domestic privacy amused himself by beating his womankind with the large club without which he is not to be imagined. He begat children for whom he had not even the love of the animal for its young, and his only instincts toward women were those of lust and ferocity. Primitive Man did all these things, and in that he did them and exulted in them, has it come about that his descendant has set his foot upon the neck of the

woman and deliberately willed that he should be her master and tyrant and she should be forever his slave.

One must be led to wonder with one of the recent historians how, with the stronger half of the race continually abusing and ill-treating the weaker, child-bearing half, it would be possible to account for the continuance of the human species at all, under conditions so severe. But allowing, for the sake of the argument, all these statements to stand in unrelieved unloveliness, it still does not appear that the cause of woman's emancipation should have needed, then or thereafter, any passionate espousal.

The necessity for the bad behavior of Primitive Man.

No doubt the behavior of Primitive Man toward his womankind would be reprobated in polite circles to-day. No doubt he beat his wife, but he also beat his male associates, and took a good drubbing in turn when he was indiscreet enough to pitch upon an opponent stronger than himself. Nor is it difficult to believe that occasions may have arisen when the man took his first lessons in that art of dignified retreat, which he has

since mastered so nobly, by dodging an eloquent weapon in the hands of some woman. Such possibilities are not unknown to our gentler days; and there are worse clubs than the primitive ones. I have myself seen, in public gatherings for lady-orators, gentlemen sit like smiling, graven images, while such hurricanes of feminine wrath and invective swept about their reddening ears as only arguing women permit themselves. Such things have I seen and heard on these occasions, as give me to believe that the place of these gentlemen in heaven will be very high.

A possibility not unknown to-day.

Primitive Man was the exponent of his own times and his own civilization. The struggle for existence was necessarily a physical one, and physical force was the proper expression of that desire to emphasize the ego, which occasionally visits our civilized bosoms to-day. And, in truth, I have sometimes thought a blow the least harmful and offensive means by which to declare ourselves, on occasion, even now. There is a brute force of the mind, whose wounds go deeper than the body. If the child-man

whipped the child-woman or was whipped in turn by her, neither of them needs to be severely reprobated therefor, and we may at least cherish the hope that it did both of them as much good as it does in the case of certain small, civilized savages to-day!

Be their past hardships what they may, the curious thing is that, directly women get the chance to carry out to any extent their own idea of the privileges of life, they develop none of that taste for ease and irresponsibility which characterizes the normal man. Instead, they manifest a desire for self-expression, for relations with every interest and enterprise of the present, for all kinds of responsibilities and hardihoods, often up to the supreme hardihood of earning their own living, even without necessity. Therefore, if a man's club fairly expresses his idea of fun, and a woman's club stands for hers, it appears at once how vast and how melancholy is the superiority of the man in the gentle art of enjoying himself.

The superiority of the man in enjoying himself.

There are, to be sure, associations of men

whose purpose is utilitarian, such as political clubs, or business or professional organizations, but no man befogs himself into thinking that any recreation is to be sought or found in them. They fit into the general serious purpose of his life in some way, and he takes them as he does other duties, and makes as much or as little of them as possible. But a man's social club is another matter. It is a privilege and a pleasure, or it is nothing. It is based on the principle of exemption. A member goes to it or not as he likes, but if he goes, he carries no burden of duties with him. He has something to drink or to smoke, or a game of billiards, if he wants them. He talks gossip (in a highly elevated and impersonal way, of course) or he thrusts his hands deep in his pockets and whistles at the window. If he stays away for three hundred and sixty-four days (and you may be sure he does stay away if he wants to), and comes back on the three hundred and sixty-fifth, he expects to find his chair just where he left it, with the ash-tray and the afternoon paper at its

Man in his club, and

side, and he betrays an immediate sense of injury if he does not. He considers that one of the things he pays for is to have the club go on in his absence so that he may feel no jar on his return. He demands of it that it shall stand for that permanency and unbroken hospitality which make it as grateful to him in suggestion and memory as in the hour of enjoyment. Therefore he is likely to misbehave sadly toward the new man at the door (who is, no doubt, a vastly better servant than the old one), until the new face gets into his recollection, and ceases to look strange. In short, a man is disposed to take his clubs as he takes other good things in life—as easily as possible—feeling that they are quite his right, and that his enjoyment is sufficient reason for their existence. All the forces of a man's club are centripetal, and have the comfort of the male individual as their centre.

Woman in hers.

But the forces of the woman's club are largely centrifugal, and have a higher aim than mere enjoyment. They are for the

enrichment of the individual largely as a means to the assistance and improvement of others. Ernesta herself has said it better than I should have dared—"A club is an association for self-improvement and mutual helpfulness." Under "self-improvement" are to be included, I suppose, all those ambitions by reason of which ladies read and discuss papers, or listen to endless lectures upon endless subjects; while the "helpfulness" sums up all those benevolences, from cleaning our public highways to cleaning our private morals, for which women have developed so remarkable a taste within the past few years. All this is very noble, no doubt, and public-spirited, and quite in keeping with the ideas set forth thirty years ago by the first woman's club in the country, when gentle Alice Cary, sitting in the president's chair, pleaded for the club as a means to the wider and fuller development of women—"to teach them to think for themselves and get their opinions at first hand, . . . to open out new avenues of employment for them, to make

The first woman's club.

them less dependent and less burdensome, to lift them out of unwomanly self-distrust and disqualifying diffidence into womanly self-respect and self-knowledge; to teach each one to make all work honorable by doing the share that falls to her, or that she may work out to herself agreeably to her own special aptitude cheerfully and faithfully, not going down to it, but bringing it up to her."

"Now," says Ernesta, triumphant, at my shoulder, "you must acknowledge that when that was written there was room for mutual helpfulness among women. They had few amusements of an improving kind, and almost no stimulus to intellectual advancement; they were self-distrustful, incapable, dependent. The woman's club has done more than any other one thing to lift them out of all this, and now you want to cast discredit upon it!"

There was room for it then.

Upon my soul I do not. I only want to extend the usefulness of the woman's club; to suggest to it, since its impelling motives have always been missionary, a new and

serious mission—the mission of being less serious.

Much of what Ernesta says is true. Allowing something for a fashion of thought and phrase set at that time by the earnest followers of Mr. Mill and his question-begging book, these words of Alice Cary are sadly reminiscent of the need of that "emancipation," which enthusiastic believers declare to be the special and triumphant movement of this "Woman's Century." But it may be well to admit to ourselves with candor that the sex seems to have arrived. The average American woman is hardly to be suspected to-day of "unwomanly self-distrust and disqualifying diffidence." She has no legal disabilities, she may enter any trade or profession she likes, have a college education, travel alone, ride a horse or a bicycle astride, and influence legislation greatly, if she cannot do it directly.

The arrival of a sex.

"Yes," admits Ernesta, "women have got a great many things they wanted and ought to have had long ago, and, whether

you admit it or not, the club has been of great assistance to them. Perhaps it is true that part of the purpose of the woman's club is accomplished, but you make no account of one of its most important and gratifying uses still — that of intellectual stimulation and culture."

Well, to blurt out the awful truth at once, I have never thought so highly of intellectual stimulation as I have of some other things in life. It is by no means proved, as yet, that, as a power upon life, the intellect is to be held in the highest esteem; just as the history of human nature does not go to show that seeing clearly and doing well have been invariably associated. One man or one woman, with that extended and clarifying vision which is occasionally the flower of a well-informed mind, but is oftener the fruit of a beautiful spirit, may be a greater power for all right-mindedness than the most active intellect, under the most conscientious stimulation. And as to the opportunity for culture offered in the woman's clubs, it seems to me that in a last

analysis, culture is found to elude any conscious effort to acquire it. I have liked to think that culture, like all other graces of the mind and soul, is not attained by being too greatly sought. It "droppeth like the gentle rain from Heaven," and in solitude and self-dependence. It is a "quiet, fireside thing," which neither needs nor desires the contribution of the exchange place. One gets it, as one gets grace from Heaven, in the seclusion of one's closet, and as "the guest of one's own soul." And so far as clubs may be supposed to minister to real scholarship and culture, I make so bold as to say that no club, social or technical, male or female, bond or free, can do more than to receive the results of individual scholarship and culture, or offer more than mere stimulation. Nor are these to be despised—nay, they are good in themselves, if one does not make too much of them; if stimulation does not take the place of culture, and if an appetite for insignificant facts is not mistaken for serious scholarship. Neither is the usefulness of the club in small towns

True culture eludes conscious effort.

to be overlooked. Here the wheels of life go more slowly than in the larger centres, books are fewer, and often the resources of the individual are not abundantly developed; though sometimes, indeed, the law is otherwise, and one finds the richest endowments of mind and soul in the most remote and desert places.

The club in small towns.

But usually the little town finds in the woman's club its one means of growth and diversion, even though the work undertaken is sometimes solemn enough to make a German university professor laugh. And that is reason enough for its existence. Nevertheless—that was a profound truth of Margaret Fuller's: "The soul that lives too much in relations becomes at last a stranger to its own resources."

To go back to that *cum hoc, propter hoc* assertion of Ernesta as to the efficiency of clubs in the advancement of women: Something has certainly been going on among us women for the last sixty years, and at a galloping rate, too. Whether we have ever

been in subjection or not, we are out of it now (greatly instigated and assisted thereto by a sex we have despised and arraigned), and we have got our heads. There seems to be little enough left for the women of the next century to accomplish in the way of mere emancipation, and to the glory of themselves and their sex. No wonder this has been called the Woman's Century! But it is well to remember that it has also been a marked century for a good many other persons. In it, one race has almost disappeared from the face of the earth, another has been led out of slavery, and the blood of a dozen others has passed into our veins. It has been the century of democracy, of steam, of electricity, of the public schools, of the growth of big cities, of the mower and reaper, of the Hoe press. If it had not also been the century of woman's advancement, that fact would be really worth mentioning. The invention of machinery alone has affected women more than it has men, both by its substitution for hand-work in the home, and by drawing them at once from the safety

We seem to have got our heads.

and dignity of their own firesides into the factories and the great whirl of industrial life, thus making of them an economic problem whose value is still uncertain. It would be pleasant and self-satisfying to agree with Ernesta that we women and our clubs have done our own emancipating, but when we can sit down and think out this same conclusion in terms of half a dozen other agencies, I fear we shall have to regard the assumption as one of those fine but undigested ideas which seem to have a special attraction for our sex. The truth seems to be that, to the wonderful and wide opportunities of this century, women have responded with an eagerness, an insistence, and a disposition to carry things to extremes which cause some of the more conservative of us to stop and ask seriously whether this restless activity among women is not hectic rather than natural. For it must not be forgotten that there is an eagerness of disease as well as of health. I know two women who have nervous prostration at the present hour. One of them has insomnia, and because she cannot

Over-activity is a symptom of disease, not of health.

sleep, writes innumerable papers for her club. She now has several pounds of wisdom, on widely varying subjects locked up in her desk—all of which she regards as so much clear gain. The other explains that she is so restless as not to be able to sit still long enough to "do" her back hair; therefore she has learned how to carry on this enterprise while walking up and down the room, and the doctor threatens her with the horrors of the rest cure. Let us devoutly hope that the next century may not be Woman's also, lest it bring us even greater earnestness than this!

The case against woman.

For one of the special confusions of the situation is that we seem to have got what we wanted without knowing exactly what to do with it. We are still on nervous tiptoe; we make duties even of our pleasures, and we lack conspicuously in that sense of proportion—that sense of the real values of things—which, if it be not essential to one's salvation in the next world, is certainly essential to one's salvation in this. "We sow hurry, and reap indigestion;" we cultivate our as-

pirations, and are landed in a typical case of neurasthenia; we tipple all kinds of intellectual stimulants—not to say intoxicants—and then we wonder that our knowledge of things is not steadier and more serviceable. I sometimes wonder if there are not plenty of women to-day, conscientiously weighted down with the burdens of progress, who would gladly exchange all the privileges of "emancipation" for the exemptions of a lesser liberty. It was with no smile of self-gratulation that I came upon this passage not long ago in one of Hannah More's letters: "Women are from their domestic habits in possession of more leisure and tranquillity for religious pursuits, as well as secured from those difficulties and strong temptations to which men are exposed in the tumult of a bustling world. Their lives are more regular and uniform, less agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shocks of opinions, and the opposition of interests which divide society and convulse the world." If the average intelligent American woman with a family and a house

In Hannah More's days.

to look after, one or two clubs to attend, a moderate interest in public affairs, and a reasonable social ambition, leads a life "less agitated by the passions, the businesses, the contentions, the shocks of opinions, and the opposition of interests," either my observation must be most defective or my experience most unfortunate.

Truly, to strike a brave and generous average between duty to one's self and desire for others is the highest task of wisdom. One wishes, of course, to be neither a shirk nor a parasite. Yet, surely, there should be somewhere in life occasional garden-spots wherein one may walk lightly, and with ease of heart concerning one's self and one's neighbor, without deliberate and selfish purpose of self-improvement or any impertinence of bestowal upon others. And if, in the unambitious intercourse of friends, with sympathy and a happy certainty of response, there be not such a green and shady spot, I know not, indeed, where to look for one. Moreover, it is just this ease in intercourse of which women stand most in need. If our

One green and shady spot in life.

doctrine of life must be heroic, then the tension must be the oftener relaxed. If women needed stimulation and opportunity forty years ago, we need to-day strength more than stimulation, and capacity rather than opportunity. We need repose, leisure, and that sense of ample self-possession which comes from the habit of "staying at home in one's mind."

The higher mission of the woman's club.

Here is the higher mission of the woman's club—to give women the occasional chance to rest, both in mind and body. For such a club as this, developed along the lines of ease, of relaxation, of pure vacuity if one wished, with exemption, and not responsibility, as its first privilege, above all, with abundant inclination in the souls of its members toward nothing but that profitable idleness which, as Mr. Stevenson says, consists not so much in doing nothing as in doing a great deal that is not usually recognized as work—for such a club it would be almost worth while to become a propagandist! For here no insidious desire for work would be allowed to masquerade under the guise of

recreation, and no amount of recreation would serve to carry any ulterior purpose of self-improvement. There would be luncheon for luncheon's sake, and women would sit down to eat it, greedy and unashamed. And you may be sure there would be no papers read, and no members fined because they were not there to listen to them. Thus a normal and natural intercourse would be promoted in which the self-improvement, though incidental and half unconscious, would be real and permanent, because developed upon the plane on which the individual customarily dwells.

The establishment of homes for clubs.

Ernesta tells me that there is a growing desire among the wealthy and influential women's clubs to build club-houses for themselves, that some few have already been built and others are devoutly projected, and when I hail this as special cause for congratulation, since all these higher uses of the club will begin with permanency in residence, she cools the fervor of my delight by saying that none of the club-houses she knows any-

thing about are especially designed for the frivolous purposes I have outlined. "There isn't a restaurant," she explains, "or such lounging-rooms as men enjoy, and as you seem to consider the only things worth having about a club. There are rooms for meetings of different kinds, from a large auditorium to small committee-rooms. There is a writing-room, usually, and a library, and sometimes a free kindergarten or a working-girls' club has quarters under its roof, since the building is intended for rational purposes and for women with earnest and rational minds."

There is something better than being instructed.

Yet money spent for earnest and rational club purposes alone, seems to me money only half spent, since a club is hardly to be considered as a business enterprise, or a philanthropic manifestation, or an educational institution, but only an added area in the small personal life. And I shall continue to hope earnestly for the coming of the day when some woman's club shall rise to a new declaration of dependence, and confess that it is tired of being instructed and wants to be

amused; when my dear, hurried, clubbed sisters may be willing to take their "little gift of being clean from God, not haggling for a better;" content even in their limitations; satisfied to know less and *be* more; glad to let the savor of happy intercourse (though without profit) have its rightful place in that complete living which would not be complete without it.

WOMEN AND REFORMS

WOMEN AND REFORMS

NOT long ago, a man, a busy and successful editor, who has an unusual way of ruminating facts until he gets all the significance possible out of them, said to me, "Have you ever thought of this?—there are in this country at the present time an unusual number of capable and conspicuous women, at the head of distinguished political or educational movements and reforms, or administering unpaid public offices with great tact and charm, and with some helpfulness. Now, if one were fully to inform himself as to the station in life of these busy persons, he would find, I think, that they are, almost without exception, either women of great wealth, having, consequently, abundant leisure and the power to destroy it, unmarried or childless women, or self-sup-

The classes of women who take up reforms.

porting women whose business interests are supposed in some way to be forwarded by publicity."

Yes, I had thought about it in a desultory and unproductive fashion.

"Well, go on thinking about it and you will find conclusions ahead of you somewhere, if I am not mistaken."

I did go on thinking about it, and he was not mistaken, but the first conclusions I arrived at (to put it in the pleasant Hibernian fashion) were questions. Which is cause and which effect? Is it public service for public service's sake or for publicity's sake? Is it not possible with leisure and the consciousness of money-power to develop a kind of epicurean taste for reforms, as for the other pleasures of life? Are we in danger of making a fad of what must be really a very solemn undertaking, when one considers that a reform is necessarily a readjustment of creation, and that if it comes to anything more than an experiment in reform, it must be about as serious a matter as creation itself? I have not yet answered any of these

Some questions I cannot answer.

questions with satisfaction to myself. Can anybody give me a ray of light?

So much for the first conclusions, which, as you see, were no conclusions at all, and perhaps the second were like unto them, for the one serious matter I settled with myself was that I did not agree with my friend as to the limitation, among women, of this taste for public affairs. So far as my own observation goes, most women have it, to-day, to a greater or less degree, and have had it, with different manifestations, ever since the days when their Puritan fathers and husbands pushed into reforms, having not yet taken the time to push out of the wilderness. In those early days of transcendentalism in New England (which must have been glorious times for the reforming instinct, for as Mr. Lowell says, there was "no brain but had its private maggot, which must have found pitiably short commons sometimes"), it is evident that women were deeply involved, from the very nature of the reforms themselves, which were such as women would naturally gravitate to. These dealt not only

The glorious days of early reform.

with the establishment of communities, where, as one chronicler has it, "everything was to be common, except common-sense," and with a reversion to labor upon land, which was declared to be the only work in which men could lawfully engage; but there were those who wished to do away with yeast, and eat unleavened bread, fermentation being considered an unholy and unwholesome process; there were persons who attacked buttons as allies of the devil, and other means of locomotion than legs, and marriages, and miracles, and the ordinary courtesies of expression—from all of which it is indubitably to be inferred that many of the prophets "wore combs at the backs of their heads."

The desire for reform in every earnest man or woman.

Now, the desire for reform is by no means to be decried, since it must make an essential part of the working capital of every earnest man or woman. Heaven forbid that any word of mine should be interpreted as remotely casting levity (which is worse than casting discredit) upon any attempt on the part of anybody toward that strenuous "reach to exceed one's grasp" which is

"what a heaven's for." Yet since we women (I see no derogation in acknowledging it) are, by that entire physical and mental organization generally known as temperament, more inclined to extremes in all things than men are, it appears wise to me that we should suspect the desire for reform whenever we can see that it has passed onward from a latent quickening heat into open excitement. To be able to sit down, beforehand, to a cool and impartial scrutiny both of the animating spirit of our reforms and of their objective and subjective results, seems to me wholly necessary before we can be sure that we are not undertaking reform for reform's sake alone, or that, in the high and unselfish purpose which is prompting us, we are not losing some adornments of character which are greatly worth keeping.

Something better than reforms.

It may or may not be worth comment that during the early days of reforms in this country there were more men reformers than women; but that later on, dating perhaps from the Civil War, the number of reforms instituted by women is the greater. Per-

haps this bears out my editor's suspicion that leisure and wealth and the power it buys, are at the bottom of half our reforms, as well as of half our mischiefs. At any rate, the number of public affairs we poor women have to look after nowadays must be either exceedingly gratifying or exceedingly disheartening, according to one's point of view. We seem to have the health of the country wholly in our hands (at least, one is inclined so to fear, contrary to what one has been taught to believe about microbes and bacteria, to say nothing of an all-wise Creator whom we used to credit with some sense of responsibility for the world He has made) ; we have kindergartens, and the Alaska Indians, and sanitary plumbing, and doing away with distinctions of sex in work, and the introduction of patriotic teaching in the public schools, and the higher education of parents, and dress reform and many more things of like gravity, which, like the apostle, I have not time to speak of now.

What has wealth to do with reforms?

Now, very likely, all these things are good to do, and to be—and to suffer, too, if one

is able to "drink fair" in the matter of reforms, and to take as well as offer an appropriate opportunity for improvement. But it seems to me most essential that we should not lose what the Germans call *Uebersicht*, in our zeal, and that we should remember, however necessary it may be to the world that any reform should be instituted, it is surely of much more importance both to the world and the reform—to say nothing of ourselves—that the reformer herself should be sane and pleasing—particularly pleasing. For here, my friends, I stoop to plead the cause of unreformed feminine nature. I have never been able to see why any one of us should be ashamed of a desire to please—even to please men. Could women's desire go farther, on the whole, even in post-mortem vanity than the epitaph Mr. Lowell was so fond of recalling, "She was so pleasant?" For myself, in honest confession, I would rather be pleasant than be President, and St. Paul defend me if I imitate his example and speak these words as a fool!

"Drink fair, Betsey, w'ot-ever you do."

One of the regrettable things about the

The persistence of the reformatory instinct.

reformatory instinct is its persistence. If one could only occasionally be a reformer and anon come back to one's quiet and passive provincialism, the case for the reformers would be proved at once. But a taste for reform is like a taste for the luxuries of life —one seldom gets over it. This in the case of women is particularly to be deplored, because there is likely to result a habit of mind and behavior more or less egoistic, downright, declaratory, and dead-in-earnest, while most of us still like our women as Sairey Gamp liked her porter—"drawed mild." Why not? Is there any advantage, in the nature of things, in severity and strenuousness over mildness and serenity? Can we be certain that the latter have not a surer vitality of their own? It is to the meek and not to the dead-in-earnest that the inheritance of the earth is promised, and at least it is to be conceded that in mildness and serenity is found the antidote to the strain and tension which the acceleration of the age puts upon us all. Possibly here is still another mission for women—or will be, when

we get the composure to consider it; that of putting ourselves and our influence on the side of nature, all of whose forces are calm and leisurely, and whom even the American himself has found no way to bully out of her supreme composure. Let us thank heaven and take courage that, with all the changes which the environment of civilization has brought about in the human being, whenever he depends upon nature he must still conform to her tranquil ways. He can digest no faster, though he may be able to digest more badly than the first man did, he must still sleep eight hours, and he has not yet shortened his leisurely prenatal life.

All this national misbehavior on the part of men is bad enough, but it seems to me infinitely worse when we come to women, for I do not see how it is possible to evade the conclusion, as indicated by the supreme functions and most imperative duties of women, that they were meant to live closer to nature than men were, to be a very part of its great orderly processes, and to have the inestimable privilege of sharing, if they will,

Woman's relation to Nature.

in its simplicity, its largeness, its tranquillity, its unconscious patience. If this be true, and I like to believe that it is, it seems to me most essential that in our desire to perform one set of duties we should not lose sight of another still more important set, that we should keep our sense of perspective, and not mistake, even in reforms, the false need for the real one; that we should be able to discriminate between the righteous necessity for fundamental adjustment and the mere desire to relieve our feelings.

Whitman's test for reformers.

"Is reform needed?" asks Walt Whitman. "Is it through you? The greater the reform needed the greater personality you need to accomplish it." Let us see. Is reform needed? Not always. A number of men and women, all good and wise, and in evening-dress, may meet together and, discovering a great evil or a real abuse, may decide that something ought to be done, and set about doing it at once. Yet it by no means follows that because things are out of joint no duty remains but to set them right. It is not quite enough that a

reform should be desirable or even necessary ; it must also be inevitable. And when it is inevitable it "hath a way" of its own. It seems then to be set in motion by an inner spiritual vitality, rather than from any mechanical and outside force. And when the reform is accomplished, it is usually to be observed that it seems to have moved with a curious—almost human—perversity, never in the obvious or direct line toward its end, but, bringing up its reinforcements from unexpected quarters, its march has been through a series of zigzags, leading sidewise, backward, anywhere but along the simple straight line upon which our convictions have settled as the one practical method of approach. The genius of reform, like the genius of the German sentence, seems to be for "yawing and backing, for getting stern foremost and for not minding the helm."

The genius of reform.

Nothing better betrays this delightful sense of humor in the spirit of reforms than that reform, at once the most complicated, the simplest, the most long-suffering, most en-

deared to the hearts of women—dress-reform. It is hardly to be supposed that the dress-reforming spirit is a product of modern times, since we find the necessity of it enjoined upon women as far back as Bible times, but for present purposes it is sufficient to go back forty years, to the time when the women of this country began to look timidly and tentatively (much as the little fish in the fable looked at the fly on the hook) toward the mere possibility of such changes in the garments they wore as should conform them, in some degree at least, to the demands of beauty or health or convenience or adequate bodily protection. A few women, looking at the matter quite simply and directly, and conceiving, therefore, that dress-reform was a matter solely of individual and private concern, shut themselves into the privacy of their homes, snipped and sheared and stitched industriously, coming forth at last to shock the gaze of a waiting world with a curious hybrid garment, neither male nor female, lacking the stern practicability of the masculine garb, lacking

Dress-reform.

also all the sweet appeal of the flowing feminine line, lacking even that long "petty-coat," without which, as the acute Mr. Pepys observes, "nobody could take them for women." It is not strange that the reform received a blow, then and there, from which it staggered along unsteadily, upheld only by the occasional enthusiasm of a business-like prophet, or a Rainy Day Club, or a Woman's Congress (where it crept in with other more popular and less necessary reforms), until about three years ago. Then, without any seeming movement, without declaring itself at all, suddenly, like light at the creative fiat, it WAS. And it came, not through any tempest of organization or any whirlwind of enthusiasm, but through the still, small wheels of the bicycle, bringing forth the one thing that was necessary and had been lacking all the time—reason enough. What a regard for health or beauty, or convenience, or individuality, or comfort had never accomplished, the desire for pleasure brought at once. To-day the short skirt, the comfortable blouse,

Pepys and petticoats.

the well-protected ankle, make up a costume as respected and as non-committal on the streets of a great city as on the golf-links of the most remote meadows. Dress-reform need go no farther in accomplishing its own ends, though it is certain to carry with it half a dozen linked reforms, more or less desirable. Given reason enough, you see—specific and immediate need—and any reform is inevitable, but in the absence of sufficient reason it is as impossible to accomplish a reform as it is physically impossible (to use one of Mr. Mallock's illustrations) to knock a man down unless he gives you a sufficient motive for doing so.

What makes reform possible.

There is no doubting that reforms are sometimes necessary; that the world is full of affairs which are not righteous, and that many of them should be set straight; just as there is a restful certainty that these surely will be set straight in their own ripe time. But even so, no matter how desirable may be the reform or how great the power of the woman, it by no means follows that she—or

you and I—are necessary to its establishment. I have sometimes wondered whether we women, conscientiously anxious as we are not to play the shirk in all questions of serious import, have not come to overrate the responsibility of the individual in the simple possession of convictions and powers. For it is not always inevitable, even in the stern deductions of the moral world, that because one has the ability to do fine things, nothing remains but to be constantly about their discharge. To be always living "at the top of one's voice" does away both with the logic and the distinction of the performance. I like to think that each one of us has a right, if she wishes it, to a sense of unexpended power and to the rich self-content that comes with it, just for their own sweet sake, if she happens to prefer these to a more ostentatious and ambitious self-expression. And as for convictions, perhaps an advance in ethics may some day lead us to suspect that convictions were meant to be serviceable mainly as springs of action, and to govern us in our relations

Living "at the top of one's voice."

with others, rather than for promiscuous circulation among our friends — who may also happen to have convictions of their own. Possibly, too, we women have been over-advised as to the peculiar responsibility for morals which is generally supposed to attend upon the possession of petticoats. Whatever the Turveydrops of the moral world may have to say about the necessity for edifying moral deportment on the part of "wooman, bewitching wooman," I have never been able to see any indubitable intent in nature herself toward binding them over to any higher moral standards than she does men. Both men and women seem to me to be compounded of the same average morality, though with certain unlike manifestations, largely the result of circumstances and opportunities. I see no special cause for believing that the average woman under like temptation would do very differently from the average man—a belief which is not lessened by Bishop Potter's recent accusation before the Women's Auxiliary of the Civil Service Reform Associa-

The necessity for elevating moral deportment.

tion that they put their relatives into office whenever they got the chance, "without any evidence that they are fitted to fill the places they applied for." Possibly women were intended by their Creator to stand for the reformatory interests of life, but I think there is not, as yet, sufficient evidence thereto either in the nature of things or of women to warrant any special abrogation of certain distinct and more familiar duties, in favor of interests mainly moral.

Bishop Potter's accusation.

And even if we had, as a sex, displayed that special aptitude for managing public affairs which has distinguished a few of us, the greater part of us are, as the division of labor adjusts things at present, either too busy or too tired to undertake them. It must be quite clear to those who are watching the trend of modern life with any interest as to its results, that we women are taxing ourselves to the point of physical distress and mental superficiality. We are carrying the heavy end of creation, and instead of deprecating it, as we should, we seem to de-

sire to impress ourselves and the world at large with the great virtue that consists in getting tired. I wish, instead, we might arise to such an appreciation of our physical worth and dignity as would make us as much ashamed of exhaustion (except under absolute necessity) as we should be of any other equally grave physical immorality. And as for the extreme busy-ness in which we rather glory to-day, what is to be said of it except that it is no more worthy of respect than any other departure from nature, and that it argues not so much for general ability as for the specific inability to exercise a wise and proper selection in the affairs of life? In some degree, also, it indicates a lessened sense of personal dignity, in that we permit ourselves to be whipped like slaves through each day with the scourge of many duties.

The virtue of selection.

I suppose the end of reform is the betterment of the world at large, and with that in view it has always been surprising to me that so little attention has been given to the part played in this general betterment of creation by mere happiness. I believe it is Mr. Ste-

venson who says that the duty of being happy is the most underrated duty in the world. And in spite of all we may wish or assert to the contrary, there is indubitable evidence that our present hold, at least, on happiness has much to do with physical well-being. I suppose one of the reasons why the reformers of the world have not been notably delightful persons to live with, is because they were either too busy or too tired to be happy. And yet a happy man, and especially a happy woman, is a radiating focus of reform, for such a person possesses that gentle and diffused persuasiveness which leads us into willing good endeavor, simply because it displays to us the good taste of enjoying fine behavior.

A taste for heroism.

But however true this may be, there will still be some women among us whose taste is for the purple of heroic action; who would rather give themselves to public benefaction than to private happiness, as also there will be some whose splendid abilities will give them to command both. For these there

may be a not unfriendly suggestion in occasionally recalling the remark of the sage Mr. Birrell, that there is "a great deal of relativity about a dress-suit," so that to wear any part of it without the rest is "provocative only of Homeric laughter." There is also a great deal of relativity about reform, and it is the failure upon the part of many reformers to understand this which makes the pathos and the humor and the satire of so many reforming movements, in themselves noble and uplifting.

The penalties of reforms.

The social structure being not a thing of mechanical parts, but a living growth, it is impossible even to lop off an excrescence without drawing blood from the whole body. It is with reforms as with everything else in the world that is an evolution and not a manufacture — you cannot get one end, which you may want, without getting the other end, which you probably will not find so desirable. It was, as Mr. Lowell says, the inability of Don Quixote to discover for himself what the Nature of Things really was, or of accommodating himself to it if he had

discovered it, which makes the work of Cervantes an immortal commentary on "all attempts to re-make the world by the means and methods of the past and on the humanity of impulse which looks on each fact that arouses its pity or its sense of wrong as if it was or could be complete in itself, and were not indissolubly bound up with myriads of other facts both in the past and the present. . . . Don Quixote's quarrel is with the structure of society, and it is only by degrees, through much mistake and consequent suffering, that he finds out how strong that structure is, nay, how strong it must be, in order that the world may go smoothly and the course of events not be broken by a series of cataclysms. . . . 'Do right though the heavens fall,' is an admirable precept so long as the heavens don't take you at your word and come down about your ears—still worse, about those of your neighbors. It is a rule rather of private than public application, for, indeed, it is the doing of right that keeps the heavens from falling."

Don Quixote's quarrel.

THE EVOLUTION OF "WOMAN"

THE EVOLUTION OF "WOMAN"

WHEN God made man and pronounced His work good, woman had also been created, and was probably therefore included in the Divine approbation. It is well occasionally to recall this fact, since, to any thoughtful observer of woman to-day, this half-and-more of humanity which is not man seems smitten as with an uneasy sense of having, with considerable ostentation, to account for itself, to justify its creation, and to work out its own salvation, though without any indication of that fear and trembling which the Apostle deemed fitting in the case of the elect. If, in the beginning, woman ever shared with man that wholesome reluctance to work which he is still natural enough

The justification of woman.

to manifest at times, it is fairly to be deduced that she has got well over it; if she ever possessed that gift of the gods—the gracious art of idling—it lies now quite beyond the reach of her hand. It would seem that she has forgotten that work was once designated a curse and designed as a punishment. For, such is the feminine appetite for being busy to-day that, in spite of the fact that women have always done more than half of the work of the world without getting special credit for it, they are now reaching out eager hands for that share of the world's curse which has hitherto fallen on the shoulders of men alone. They are in the professions, in commerce, in trade, in politics, in finance, and in men's attire. They own ships and run them, they raise live stock on Western farms and make fortunes, they speculate in stocks and lose fortunes, they manage vast philanthropies. They are bakers, butchers, barbers, artists, poets, sculptors, and lady managers. There is probably no reason why they may yet not be tailors and telegraph linemen—the two trades which a thoughtful

An early definition of work.

man has recently noted as the only ones in which women are not at present busily employed. It is therefore not marvellous that women should be engaged to-day (to quote the language of one of the most brilliant lady discoverers) in "celebrating as more important than the discovery of Columbus the fact that the General Government has just discovered woman." One must allow something certainly to the rapture of a sex that has just been discovered. But the fact is that, in all ages, and in all stages of civilization, women have always done half the work of the world and carried half its responsibilities. Their present wonderful activity, which a believer has called "lifting the sex out of mere sex-hood into womanhood," has nothing either new or wonderful about it—except her way of phrasing it. The one point of difference is that while women were once content to do their work unostentatiously and without asking special recognition for it, to-day they manifest a disposition toward the title rôles, and the calcium light, and the centre of the stage.

The discovery of a sex.

Difficult as it may be for us of to-day to realize it, the actual truth is that each century of the world's history has had its full share of women as gifted, as dignified, and as importantly if not as publicly engaged as the women of to-day. Whenever there has been a special gift, it has made itself manifest without asking whether a man or a woman were its exponent. There have always been painters, and poets, and philosophers, and law-givers, and prophets, among women; there were scholars, there were even physicians—for women were the first physicians, and their presence in the profession to-day is a restoration rather than an innovation. Miriam the Hebrew, Sappho and Aspasia, Elizabeth and Mary and Lady Jane Grey in England, and Victoria Colonna in Italy, and Catharine de' Medici in France, are hardly to be considered as objects of patronizing comment from the women of to-day, while Lavinia Fontana, painter in ordinary to Gregory XIII., and Gentileschi, whose portraits of the Court of Charles I. were remarkable, were possibly as famous as any women painters of the pres-

Remarkable women of the past.

ent time. So, too, Serani, and Propertia de Rossi, and Sister Plautilla, and Rachel Van Pool, in their own day received as distinguished honors as will probably fall to most women in what is now gallantly termed the "woman's century."

One might go on with the list indefinitely, if it were necessary to do so by way of establishing the truth that, as there have always been exceptional men in the world, so there have always been exceptional women to match them, and that between these there has always been an equality of power and privilege. So, too, one might go on indefinitely to show that between the unexceptional classes, between the commonplace, ungifted man and the routine-loving, ordinary woman there was, for more centuries than one might guess, even during the feudal period in which the legal equities of women were most abridged, a community of interests and content which left no room for that unhappy sex-consciousness which has wrought too much mischief since. I am far from asserting that the relations between men and

Equality between men and women.

women in these times were those of ideal justice, or even of justice at all. But they belonged definitely to their times. They were "the result of both natural and sexual selection, working upon the pagan ideal," in which every woman was supposed to be under the protection of some man, and thus to be subordinated to him and represented by him; but with this there was between the sexes neither rivalry in practical matters nor an abnormal sex-consciousness in intellectual affairs. The women were as shrewd, as busy, as contented, and as unconscious of themselves as the men. While there were undoubted sex distinctions in work, as there must always have been, these were such as had established themselves upon perfectly obvious and healthy lines, since neither sex had discovered the inferiority of woman's mind as now scientifically deduced from the weight of her brain, the construction of her shoulder-blades, and the fact that she buttons her garments "centripetally," while a man buttons his "centrifugally"—whatever that may mean. These important deductions came later.

I have always believed that the Puritan influence had much to do with developing the sex-consciousness in woman, first, because one sees it for the first time sharply manifest, both in men and women, in that period of literary activity immediately following the establishment of the Puritan influence in England; second, because it is impossible that so great a moral change as was wrought by Puritanism could take place among any people without affecting greatly both the character and the position of the women. John Wallington, "turner in East-cheap," but no less a Puritan gentleman, leaves us a portrait of his mother as that of the model London housewife. He says:

Sex-consciousness and the Puritans.

"She was very loving and obedient to her parents, loving and kind to her husband. Very tender-hearted to her children, loving all that were godly, much disliking the wicked and profane. She was a pattern of sobriety unto many; very seldom was seen abroad except at church; when others recreated themselves at holidays and other times, she would take her needle-work and say,

'Here is my recreation.' . . . God had given her a pregnant wit and an excellent memory. She was very right and perfect in all stories of the Bible, likewise in all the stories of the martyrs, and could readily turn to them; she was also perfect and well-seen in the English Chronicles, and in the descent of the Kings of England. She lived in holy wedlock with her husband twenty years, wanting but four days."

A model Puritan woman.

Here is the Puritan's ideal woman—the woman of the type that made the mothers of this country—dutiful, chaste, pious, practical, sober-minded, narrow, knowing her Bible and her English History, keeping within her walls except when she went to church, neglecting no duty in life, not even that of hating the wicked as much as she loved the righteous.

At the same time, there was an influence second only to that of Puritanism in developing this sex-consciousness among women—the presence of the exact opposite to the Puritan woman—the woman of the Stuart court, the product, as were the men about

her, of an impassioned revolt against the unnatural severity of the Puritans, among those whose blood still beat out the rhythm of Shakespeare's time. She was clever and full of affairs, she made or lost the fortunes of public men as she chose, she was well-informed in public matters, and was as gay and witty and licentious as the Puritan woman was chaste and decorous. It is inconceivable that, with the opportunity so close to him, and with the human nature not all out of him, the male Puritan should not have regarded her as the "awful example" to which he pointed when he wished to inculcate among the females of his house a proper appreciation of the humble and modest virtues which adorn her sex. That this would help to intensify the sex-consciousness already existing among the women of the time is indisputable, for this particular manifestation lay along the line of morals; and nowhere in all the kingdoms of thought has sex-consciousness been from the first so insistently, inconsistently, mischievously operative as in the domain of morals.

The woman of the Stuart Court.

The post-Puritan period.

Allowing, however, for a difference in judgment in assigning the cause, it is a fact that the whole moral and intellectual atmosphere of the period following the Puritan influence was full of this subtle miasma. With an eager craving for learning, the brilliant women of that time exhibited a diffidence in acknowledging it almost as reprehensible as the masculine prejudice against gratifying it. Mary Fairfax, reasoning that it was unjust that women should have been given a desire for knowledge if it were wrong to acquire it, was, nevertheless, obliged to teach herself Euclid and Greek by stealth, and to depend upon her memory of Euclid for original work at night, since candles were wholly denied her. Mrs. Radcliffe naïvely confesses, in one of her prefaces, that she was always compelled, when writing, to restrain her sense of humor to a degree consistent with feminine propriety. Dr. Johnson, at his own suggestion, taught Fanny Burney Latin, but was not willing to face the public opprobrium sure to follow such a heresy, and therefore enjoined her to say

nothing about it—a caution she was quite disposed to heed, thinking, says Mr. Seeley, "it was an injury to be considered a learned person." Hannah More's father, a man of robust common-sense and much learning, but, nevertheless, so her biographer tells us, "remarked for his strong dislike of female pedantry," undertook, at his wife's request, to teach little Hannah Latin and mathematics. After a short time he became frightened at his own success and dropped the mathematics, keeping on with the Latin only at the passionate importunity of both mother and child. That famous Doctor—and donkey—Dr. Gregory, in his "Legacy To My Daughters," accepted as a standard work on female propriety in the eighteenth century, commended to girls who were so unfortunate as to be robust by nature such constant simulation of sickly delicacy as was considered necessary to keep up the proper feminine charm. It was he who cautioned all women carefully to hide such good sense and knowledge as they might possess—the first being an undesirable attribute, as assum-

The education of some famous women.

ing a superiority over the rest of the company; the second as equally undesirable, "because men generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts and a cultivated understanding." Before the deed, both the right and the ability to do anything worth doing was denied to women, and after the deed, such inordinate praise was bestowed upon them as clearly indicated the subversion of all real standards of criticism to the fact of sex alone. Nowhere was there the atmosphere of healthy unconsciousness in which alone the best work of either sex is possible. No wonder that the robust mind of Mary Wollstonecraft turned away from all this unreality with what she called "a sickly qualm." No wonder that, in her lawyer-like "Vindication," a little later, all the force of her intellect was put into one proposition—women were created to be human beings first and women second—a proposition which, like most generalizations, carries with it an over-statement which it is easier to make than to qualify.

Standards of criticism not healthy.

Meantime the same state of affairs was establishing itself in our own country. The women of the Colonies, both north and south, were by no means a set of incapables. These had brought with them the accomplishments of the women of Shakespeare's time, and the intellectual restlessness of the periods following. They not only spun, and wove, and cured the meat, and made the clothing for the family, shoes and hats included, but they discussed theology and state-craft with the men, they kept the dame schools and the family records, and if the spelling and penmanship of these last impress one to-day with an air of untrammelled originality, in those days, at least, they conformed entirely to the best masculine standard. As soon as there was a literary market in America, the women rushed into it as fast as the men did. Hawthorne, Poe, Drake, Cooper, and Halleck are offset by Emma Embury, Mrs. Whitman, Hannah Gould, Mrs. Child, and Margaret Fuller. The fact that the women of that time were shut out of the high schools has been much more emphasized than the

The women of the American Colonies.

fact that without any intellectual training, and with only such opportunities as they could make for themselves, their work is quite worthy to be compared with the best of men. The truth is, the value of mere education is, and always has been, enormously overrated in comparison with the value of that original endowment of brains and character which is a gift of birth, and quite as often a gift to women as to men. The American women of the earlier times were as truly the intellectual peers of the men of those times as the average American woman to-day is the superior in education and culture of the average man.

The removal of legal disabilities.

I am far from thinking that the position of the American women at that time was ideal, or that there was not room for such warring protest against her legal disabilities as was made by certain just men and brave women. But all these injustices were not so much oppressions as survivals—survivals of a condition of society in which woman was certainly subordinated to man. Still, since this subordination was rooted in the greater

strength of man, and was, no doubt, the wisest and safest provision in a moving civilization, it hardly seems worth our while to arouse sex-antagonism by hunting for discreditable motives in the matter, when those at hand are both creditable and sufficient.

Great, indeed, was the accomplishment of these men and women in removing many of the legal disabilities of women, and thus breaking the entail that had given the world to man; but other influences have been stronger. So inevitable was the change in the position of women from the hour of the invention of the power-loom and the steam-engine, that they would have arrived at their present place of opportunity—though not so speedily, perhaps—if these earnest reformers had never spoken a word of protest and entreaty. The typewriter alone has done more for women than the ballot ever will, and the mower-and-reaper, by reducing to one-tenth the number of men employed on the farms, has lightened their labor as no legislation could lighten it. The enormous increase of wealth, and the leisure which wealth buys,

The change in position of women was inevitable.

the multiplication of periodical literature, and the easy access to good books, the founding of colleges for girls and of hundreds — nay, thousands — of women's clubs and Chautauqua circles, the marvellous political concessions made by men in the last twenty years, all these have been wonderful factors in putting power into the heads and hands of women. And, too, there was the Civil War. In this, the ethical and humanitarian question involved was such as to appeal directly to women. Almost before they knew it they found themselves thinking and speaking and writing on public questions. The remarkable success of the Sanitary Commission—which embraced ten or twelve thousand bands of inexperienced women, all over the country, in a gigantic business and philanthropic enterprise involving millions of dollars, at a time when the credit of the country was most unstable, and when not even the shrewdest statesmen could predict the turn of to-morrow—taught the women of the country what they could do in a business and executive way. The work of the

What the Civil War did for women.

women-nurses and women-physicians in the hospitals gave them the first knowledge of their power in philanthropy. It is not fanciful to adduce as still another factor in hastening the independence of women, the loss of hundreds of thousands of men in the war. Every death meant the loss of a protector to at least one woman, usually to more. If there were children dependent upon her, this often meant to the mother a necessary entrance into the world, to do whatever work was most instantly available; while the death of every one of the gallant young fellows who kissed their sweethearts' lips and went out to die on the battle-field, robbed one woman's life of the absorbing interests of love, which gone, she turned, as women do, "when love is done," to the intellectual and philanthropic life for what consolation it could give.

A woman's world is as wide as a man's.

Through such complex influences, and many others, has it come about that to-day, in this country, a woman's work is as wide as a man's. Whether we are personally convinced,

or not, of the economic value and of the social propriety of her participation in all the work of the world, we must admit that there seems to be nothing a woman may wish to do that she has not the fairest chance at trying. Best of all, she may, if she chooses, do her work—as competent and even as remarkable work as she is able to make it—without attracting special notice because of her sex. And she may take the rewards of this work, if she will, in just the healthy, unconscious, matter-of-fact way in which men assume that the world belongs to those who can take it, and proceed to take it, making no more ado about the matter. But, strange to say, this is precisely what the woman of to-day does not wish to do. The "stern realities of life"—that phrase so serviceable to men in talking to undergraduates and women—have not taken the sex-nonsense out of her head. She is the victim of a sex-consciousness as acute and distressing as that of Fanny Burney's time, although she wears it as the queen wore her rue, "with a difference." Whereas Fanny Burney and her friends dissembled, with the

most shocking modesty, their intellectual gifts and graces, the clever woman of to-day is moved to make some special ostentation of them, as if their possession were a matter of dispute or surprise. She makes much of the present activity among women, but the fact which she emphasizes is not the quality of the work, which is the only thing worth comment, but the difficulties overcome in doing the work, and the fact that the worker wears skirts instead of trousers, which considerations have no bearing whatever on the case. Following the goading of this latter-day sex-consciousness, she and her kind have accomplished the differentiation and classification of that species known as Woman—with the solemnity of the capital letter. Woman may be defined as women raised to the nth power. She is a species of high, and heroic, and "emancipated" womankind, as serviceable to the sex for the purposes of rhetorical and impassioned address as that gentle and vapid species, "the fair sex," is to men for after-dinner gallantry. She is wise with the wisdom of clubs and conventions, and strong

Modern sex-consciousness.

in her inheritance of instincts. There is nothing of which she is not sure, except that man was designed by nature to be her helper; and there is nothing which she will not do for the good of her own species, except do nothing. She believes devoutly in a Hereafter for her kind, compared with which the opportunities of the Here-now are as shadows in the night. And about all these things she has altogether too much to say. The wide-awake editor insistently presents considerations of public affairs from "The Woman's Page" and "Her Point of View," as if the structure of the feminine brain were such as to necessitate a woman's looking at things in an inverted and peculiar way, as Timothy Tittlebat saw the landscape, looking through his legs.

The evolution of "Woman."

In recent issues of Poole's "Index" I find whole pages devoted to Her consideration. She is discussed as a Smuggler and as a School Director, as a Detective and as a Drunkard, as a Public Servant and as a Guardian Angel, as a Tactician and as a Merchant, as a Mannish Maiden and as a Sceptic. Somebody

Some aspects of "Woman."

finds things to say about "Women as Women," somebody else retorts with "Women as They Are Supposed to Be," and still another gives the tail of the argument a last and, presumably, authoritative twist in the discussion of "Women as They Are."

Nor, when ink fails her, does interest flag. She goes into councils and congresses for the purposes of self-celebration, and, announcing as her motto "Not Women, but Woman," restricts her study of the world's interests to such aspects as are either directly affecting women, or directly affected by them. Into the "Woman" side of all these subjects she burrows, with beautiful unconsciousness that by so doing she is defeating the very purpose for which these women's gatherings are called, namely, "the amelioration of the condition of women."

"The amelioration of the condition of women."

Whatever amelioration the condition of women may need to-day, it is not to be accomplished by going into rhetorical or executive session about it. The individual wrongs from which individual women are suffering are not, alas! to be righted by

papers in congresses, and the sex-wrongs from which all women are supposed to be suffering are only aggravated by being made the subject of excessive consideration. Take, for example, the one wrong of which women complain with most sharpness and most justice—unequal payment for equal work. Anything that helps to emphasize the fact that women are new-comers in any field of work tends directly to lower the wages of that work; anything that helps to arouse the prejudices of men, and so keeps up unfair discrimination against women-workers, tends directly to depress wages; anything that serves to obtrude the fact that women are not equal to men in units of horse-power is sure to lower wages. The fact is that, since nature herself has had some arguments to offer in the matter, women-workers are at a considerable physical disadvantage in comparison with men, and the less they say about it the better.

Nature's argument in the matter.

So it is with other favorite themes of discussion among women. The less said, for example, in declaration of women's rights

and in glorification of her achievements the better for both rights and achievements: for to declare a right implies a question of it, and ostentatiously to parade ability is not to dignify it. The strongest assertion of a right is the assumption of it, and the only proof of equality of work is equality of work. Now, all these and many other things like them are the stuff of which women's congressional discussions are made, and they all serve charmingly to keep alive that intangible something called the "Woman Question," of which men are already very tired, and of which women ought to be. For men have risen, with the wonderful multiplication within the last few years of powers and activities common to both sexes, to recognize the fact that, since work is a neuter noun, where woman the worker is concerned, the chivalry of disregarding her sex is greater than the chivalry of recognizing it. Both men and women were equally culpable in the sex-consciousness of two centuries ago. To-day it is women, and not men, who are responsible for it.

Is there a "Woman Question?"

It is easy to recall the national illustration of this at the time of the World's Fair, when, quite ignoring the fact that the World's Fair was an exhibition not of workers but of work and of its results, the women of the country rapturously segregated their exhibits in a building designed by a woman, built by a woman, decorated by women, and matronized by "lady managers." Now, if the work of women, judged by the standards of work alone, was of sufficient dignity and gravity to entitle it to recognition in a representative exhibition like this, then, by all means, it should have been put in its proper place, alongside the work of men, to win acknowledgment on its merits alone. The fact that it was the work of a woman had no more real significance than the color of the hair, or the shape of the face, of the woman who did the work. To make a separate exhibit of women's work does no honor to women, no matter how good the work may be, for it seems to make a marvel of what is no marvel at all, namely, that women are as capable as men in most things, more capa-

The segregation of women's work

ble than men in many things, and utterly incapable of a few things that men do very well. Since, therefore, a clever woman is hardly to be regarded as a precocity or monstrosity, like a trained monkey or a "dog walking on his hind legs," the fact that she has painted a remarkable picture, or embroidered a wonderful tapestry, or invented a churn operated by electricity, or chiselled a piece of marble into poetic form, offers no warrant for segregation on the part of women-workers such as this exhibition displayed. Even the imposing collection of books, written exclusively by women and kept with such devotional spirit in the library in the woman's building, had no significance, unless one sees a fine humor about it all; for if this collection were not worth making for its intrinsic value, it certainly does not redound to the glory of womankind that it should have been made for any other reason. If the genius of the writer and the understanding of the people be not enough to keep a book from perishing, no antiseptic of sex can do so.

and its mistakes.

The fact that the "Woman's Exhibition" misrepresented clever women by representing them as precocities is not the only objection to it. It is impossible that any display of material results, such as was there offered, should do justice to the most important and influential work of women. For this work deals with things spiritual, and not with things temporal. It is social—in the broad sense of the word—and is what the short-sighted economists call unproductive. For, with all their wide opportunities for work outside the home, the majority of women elect the work that keeps them within its walls. They neither paint pictures, nor carve statues, nor write books, nor make inventions, but they rear their sons in the ways of upright men and teach their daughters the glory of womanliness. They are the friends and counsellors of their husbands. They do the

The real work of women.

> "little kindnesses
> Which most leave undone, or despise,
> For naught that sets one heart at ease,
> And giveth happiness or peace,
> Is low-esteemèd in their eyes."

These are the women who have what is asked for in the wisdom of the old hymn, "a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize." And can there be a more heavenly freedom than this freedom of mind and heart from themselves? For, after all, I suspect, it is never life that we tire of, but only ourselves; the little, petty, tiresome, egotistic selves to which we are bound and with which we drag along a tormented and retarded living. This is not sentiment only; it is a great spiritual truth that the individual never reaches its fullest development until it ceases to care for self-expression in desiring to show forth that something beyond itself which is the Universal Self. Moreover, the growth of the individual is best accomplished by the same carelessness of self—a trustful carelessness, after all, since it leaves the matter of growth where it belongs, with Nature, because it knows that growth is her affair, not ours. When the individual seeks too anxiously to work out his own development and perfection, nature steps aside and lets him do the work. The result is an

Real freedom.

artifice, not the type; decadence, not progression. For, just as we may throw any part of the organism out of health by concentrating attention upon it, so, by self-consciousness we may over-individualize ourselves into the decadent, who understands and is happy only in differentiation. The instinct of children is better wisdom; nothing makes a child so unhappy as to be in some way unlike his playmates in those externals which he understands; a difference in his clothes, in his speech, in the way his hair is cut, gives him the most acute distress. He seems to have a glimpse of the truth that the universal is the normal, that the type is the only thing that endures; if there were words for his wisdom, he would perhaps tell us that self-consciousness is the creaking of machinery that is out of order.

Differentiation is not progression.

In any gathering of women for Woman's sake, the phrase "the emancipation of Woman" sounds like a recurrent Wagnerian *motif* through all the storm and stress. But the real emancipation of Woman will come only when she is emancipated from herself.

THE CASE OF MARIA

THE CASE OF MARIA

MY friend Mrs. Talbot recently became the proud and happy mistress of a most perfect maid. She was trim, respectful, not too pretty, quiet, and exquisite in the performance of all her duties. For weeks Mrs. Talbot's drawing-room had an air of radiant cleanliness; the brasses shone like gold, no breath nor film of dust clouded the deep pools of color in the mahogany, while the subtle blending of respect and appreciation in Maria's table-service was such as to set the most timid guest at ease. As time went on there appeared no unpleasant train of social-minded friends, or relatives with alarming and recurrent diseases. Maria seldom went out, and took her mistress's interests on her shoulders in a capable and motherly way. The problem of living seemed

The requisites of a perfect maid.

solved at last; and Mrs. Talbot made whole the shattered remains of her faith in human nature and assumed the complacent air of one whose virtues have finally met their just reward. But Mr. Talbot was sceptical, and was heard openly to declare that the situation was quite beyond belief, and that he expected the entire Talbot family would be found strangled in their beds some fine morning. For four months this state of bliss endured. Meanwhile a certain joyous indifference on the part of Mrs. Talbot to the sufferings of others was a sad trial to her less fortunate friends. Then the blow fell.

Playing the banjo is not one of them.

For several evenings the sound of a banjo, not played by Marion Talbot's accomplished fingers, sounded up from the kitchen into the drawing-room. It was no light, pleasing tinkle, either, but the solid, deliberate, two-toned plunkings of an instrument with untuned strings swept by unaccustomed fingers. It was Maria. Maria had bought a banjo and was practising o' nights; moreover, Maria was asking to go out once a week to take a lesson of a "professor." Mr. Talbot

laughed and advised compromise, but Mrs. Talbot and Miss Talbot were firm. Banjo-playing by the parlor-maid was not compatible with the dignity of the family. Maria's services were quite perfect, without including any knowledge of musical instruments. "I play the banjo myself," cried Miss Talbot, hotly, "and, besides, how ridiculous we should become in everybody's eyes if we were continually kept explaining to our friends that we had a superior kind of parlor-maid whom we allowed to play the banjo in the evening!"

Mrs. Talbot interviewed Maria; then wept the tears of one who feels herself to be indeed the plaything of fate, for it was *aut banjo, aut nullus* with Maria. By much saving and self-denial (she supported a mother and two sisters out of her wages), she had at last accomplished the dearest hope of her life, and was in no mind to be thwarted now. So Maria went, dangling the banjo-case respectfully but firmly. And the Talbots became as the rest of us once more.

Aut banjo aut nullus.

It is only women who are capable of up-

holding principles by such heroic sacrifices as these. I suspect, too, it is only women who are able to discern the existence of a principle inimical to society in such a situation; for while Mrs. Talbot and Marion were unanimous and unequivocal in their resentment, Mr. Talbot was openly perplexed, and betrayed secret sympathies with Maria. He seemed to catch an occasional sniff of a principle somewhere, latent but violated, and it made him uneasy. "There is something wrong," he declared, "when a girl, simply because she engages to do certain duties in a house, is not allowed the gratification of her single impulse toward an elevation of mind or taste. I should like to see myself setting up a rule to prevent my men playing the banjo after mill hours—or the jews-harp, either." "Then," asked Mrs. Talbot, loftily, "do I understand that you would accept the organization of a brass band among our domestics, for evening rehearsals in the kitchen?" Men are notoriously averse to the *argumentum ad hominem*, therefore the conversation languished at once. It was a

Mr. Talbot is perplexed.

great pity, because probably Mr. Talbot's intellect, progressing toward the next step of the proposition, would have hit upon what seems to me the kernel of the whole difficulty in this seemingly hopeless, inextricable, delicately complicated problem—the labor question in our kitchens.

The labor question in our kitchens.

For that is what it really is, call it what you will—"the housekeeping problem," "domestic service," or "the servant question." It is no special and peculiar problem which attends naturally upon the existence of a home, as fungi spring up in a favorable soil. It is an integral part of that great labor question which is going to remain with us, "until we have shaken off the dead hand of feudalism which still presses with crushing weight upon the people through almost all the form sand institutions of the present day society." And it is more hopeless and distressing at the present day than any other form of the labor problem, because it conforms least to the natural laws which are allowed to regulate, more or less freely, labor outside the home.

Definition of a heroine.

I have no mind to harrow up the minds of my readers with any explication of the miseries and mysteries that confront the average housekeeper in the daily maintenance of a simple but comfortable existence for her family; as for herself, an existence at all seems a struggle which at times she would gladly give over. One might define a heroine as the average American woman who does her own housekeeping. But some hint of the unnatural and unhappy state of affairs existing at present may be deduced from the consideration of two economic facts. First, woman is, by nature, the home-founder and the home-maker. This is not intended as an assertion of personal belief, but as a statement of scientific fact. It was woman—not man—who opened the industrial world; it was woman who made the first rude dwellings, and dressed skins, and wove textiles for clothing. It was woman, and not man, who made the first fire, and the first utensils for cooking, and the first rude tools for industrial ends. All her activities clustered about the hearth and ministered to the

home. If the woman and the work had not reacted upon each other so that, to-day, women should be by nature home-makers and home-lovers, there are still depths for the scientists to sound in the working of heredity and of natural selection. And yet, —here is my second fact—the enormous piles of stone and brick rapidly filling the choice plots of ground in our large cities and shutting out the light of heaven with their gabled tops, are mute if not magnificent witness to the fact that the investment of capital is all against the perpetuation of the separate home. The shrewd modern investor is willing to put hundreds of thousands against hundreds of dollars that (for his lifetime at least) women are going to prefer the ease of the apartment hotel to the separate house, with its privacy, its own table, and—alas—its own service.

The opinion of the modern investor.

I do not believe that this new economic recognition of a serious change in certain social conditions means that the constitution or the tastes of women have undergone any radical change, but only that the matter

of founding a home has become so difficult and so complex that ordinary strength and courage fail before it. The love for the home is as abiding as ever, but the conduct of the home is a problem that seems yearly more hopeless of solution; so, many a woman, hiding her defeat under a brave front of preference, sells her house, stores her defeated household gods, and retreats into the hired splendors of the apartment hotel.

What the newspapers say.

Then the newspapers and reviews have long articles written, proving that the increase of wealth and the modern love of luxury and display are doing away with all disposition toward that simple domestic life which was the intent of the founders of the republic, and which must ever be the bulwark of democracy.

Despite the popular theory which originates the housekeeping problem in the confusions and perplexities of the present social condition, the truth is that the labor problem in the home is older than this generation, older than this country, and is, in fact, exactly as old as human nature itself. There

is a great deal of very comforting reading for housekeepers in Mrs. Earle's "Colonial Dames and Goodwives," where good Christopher Marshal, a well-to-do Quaker of Philadelphia, has kindly preserved for us some record of his wife's afflictions with "the girl Poll" and one Antony, a "character worthy of Shakespeare's comedies." A generation later Mrs. Trollope found other delicious episodes to record, when she turned her keen English eyes on "the great experiment" in this country, with Charlotte and Nancy as its special exponents. Nor does the present situation in England appear to be any less desperate than our own, if one may judge from the way in which the English mistresses are rushing into hysterical print in the "ladies' newspapers" to discuss these "tyrants." Says one writer: "They invade our drawing-rooms and boudoirs, and as surely as two or three women are gathered together, so surely will domestic service be one of the inevitable topics of conversation. As to taking up a newspaper or a magazine without meeting that domestic

The question is not a new one,

old woman of the sea—it is a sheer impossibility."

nor peculiar to this country.

The problem, you see, is not peculiar to the complexity of modern living, nor even to a country where political institutions of theoretical equality are based on a state of most glaring social inequality. It is to be found wherever the relations of domestic service are established, and it has been, and is, universally a problem, because its conditions cross-cut the first instincts of that perdurable human nature, which is in us now as it was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. The relation is fundamentally wrong, and where principles are wrong, details can never be adjusted.

The confusion begins when Maria and her mistress meet in that wonderful arena of ignorance and misunderstanding—the intelligence office.

The mistress does all the talking.

I am aware that certain dogged writers of humor are in the habit of making this appear

quite otherwise, but my own observations bear out my statement. Maria usually manages to stipulate for her "every other Sunday" and her "every other Thursday," but for the rest, she gives herself unquestioning, unbargaining, into the employ of an unknown mistress, who seldom informs her definitely just what is expected of her, and who coldly repels any attempt on Maria's part to find out for herself. Yet I have never been able to understand why, in a contract supposed to be of equal interest, all the right to self-satisfaction should be on one side. I see no reason why Maria should not ask questions of Mrs. Talbot, as well as Mrs. Talbot of Maria. Nor have my own experiences led me to believe that in such an encounter Maria is not as likely to behave herself with propriety and respect as Maria's employer; and so far from decrying the disposition on the part of a servant to ascertain somewhat definitely beforehand just what is expected of her, I regard it as quite worthy of respect and attention. "Do you allow servants to ask you questions in an intelligence office?"

Maria and her employer in the intelligence office.

—some Mrs. Talbot is going to spear me with this question.

Dear madam, I urge them to do so, and I find that my self-respect is not half as much involved in the consequent catechising as my sense of humor. Linda Olsen once asked me if I was an "easy mad lady," with a disarming dimple in either pink cheek. But what would you? I had just asked her if she had a "beau"—the single word which, it seems, covers all tender relations, in good Swede-English.

One's sense of humor involved.

"But you *had* to know about that," says Mrs. Talbot, "if you were going to take her into your home." Indeed I did. I trust that nothing but the severest necessity could have induced me to such an unwarranted impertinence. But I am sorry I had to.

Now, supposing Mrs. Talbot to have satisfied herself fairly that Maria is a possibility —a wise woman never affirms more to herself—and Maria to have entered upon her new labors. Mrs. Talbot is kindly, and Maria has privileges which are intended to

make her very grateful; but the truth is Maria has no liberty. She wears the clothes her mistress prescribes; she sees her friends when and where her mistress allows; she eats, sleeps, and moves always under direction. And she does this for twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four! She may not always be under orders, but she is always under authority. Just here lies the difference between organized labor outside the home and organized labor within it. In the former, are provided such conditions and terminations of his labor as give the man some chance to emerge from the worker. The poorest puddler in the mill may have his own hours, his home, his family, his associates, his pipe, his glass of beer. Maria has nothing. She has neither home, nor family, nor associates, in any real sense. She has no hour in the day that she can count upon as being wholly, entirely, inevitably her own, beyond the sudden call of duty. She may not even have her banjo.

Maria is always under direction.

Now, I am not going to write myself down so incapable a housewife as to say that

I should have decided differently from Mrs. Talbot in the momentous matter of the banjo. I, too, should have put ashes on my head and bade Maria go, if play she must; but I think I should have grace given to me to see, even in that bitter hour, that Maria was no transgressing culprit, but an equal martyr with myself, and that both of us were the victims of certain false economic conditions which brought it about that Maria's ideas as to the pursuit of happiness for herself, were incompatible with my ideas as to my pursuit of happiness for myself; and that I, being in the position of advantage (economically, not ethically, you understand), had my way. The ethics of the situation were perfectly sound. For certainly the proposition is true that no society, or class of society, can be founded on any permanent basis so long as any elevating aspiration is held to be reprehensible; human progress has been entirely a matter of individual aspiration. Just as certainly is it true that if Maria chose to voice the yearning of her soul to higher things, in the

A case of double martyrdom.

plunking of the banjo (grotesque as that was, and no doubt a waste of time and money besides), her right to express herself in this way was as undoubted as the right of Mrs. Talbot to pierce the misty "Twilight of the Gods," if her aspirations carried her so far. But, you see, the practical outcome of it all was that Maria's aspirations interfered with the comfort of the family. Therefore, Maria's relations to the family ceased. The flaw was economic, since all possible provision was made for the independence of the employer, and none whatever for the independence of the employé. Maria should have had some chance at her own idea of life and at the things that are more than life—that is, Maria should have a life and a chance to live it, outside the family home, where the comfort of a Talbot would in no way interfere with her aspirations.

Maria should have a life outside.

Not long ago there came into my hands, as the result of one of the popular "discussions" in the daily newspapers, over one thousand letters from working women all

A popular newspaper discussion.

over the country. The question asked was, "Is the shop or factory preferable to domestic service, and why?" The answers, like the question, may have been somewhat ungrammatical, but they were interesting and most significant. Two-thirds of the writers advocated the greater desirability of factory or shop work, and the reasons given therefor were summed up as follows:

Working hours are fixed in factory and shop work, and extra work is paid for.

The worker is in the way of advancement, if capable.

She receives orders from one person.

Outside her working hours, the worker's life is no concern of her employers. She has entire liberty to see her friends when and where she likes; she can read, study, improve herself in any way she chooses; she can go out when she likes and come in when she likes.

She does not lose caste through her employment.

All these are intelligent, wholesome, human reasons, and altogether to the credit of the girls who gave them.

On the other hand, the house-workers set forth their advantages as follows:

Their work is more healthful than factory or shop work.

More money can be saved.

House-workers do not lose caste in the mind of any sensible person. (This somewhat hysterically.)

Given a good mistress, they have a better home, kinder treatment, and as many privileges as any other workers.

All of which is undoubtedly true, but the last statement begs the entire question. The rights and privileges of any class of workers ought not to be a matter of entire complaisance on one side, and of dependence on the other, and domestic service should be no exception. The fact that it is an exception is, I believe, what is keeping the most intelligent class of girls out of our homes, thus constantly levelling downward the competence and desirability of the serving-class. I have read many papers on the domestic situation, written by many mistresses, and nearly all of them relegate the millennium of

housekeeping to that glorious but dim future when we are all alike to discover the dignity of household labor, and the possibility of its wonderful elevation to a science and an art. But no labor is dignified unless the dignity of the worker be preserved, and no worker can retain his dignity if his individual liberty is entirely ignored. This, I think, is at base the reason why domestic servants lose caste—a fact which most mistresses are sturdy to deny, but which they may as well admit, since the domestics themselves accept it. "I can't let him come and see me, ma'am," said my Amelia, naïvely, in admitting the tender relation. "He don't know I am a living-out girl. He couldn't have me, if he did. His folks wouldn't let him."

The millenium of housekeeping.

Human nature has wonderfully sly ways of getting at the truth of things, and the subtle sense of disapproval which is at the bottom of the recognition of social loss in domestic service comes, I believe, from a subconscious but acute recognition of the fact that at present it demands a greater giving up of

personal liberty than is consistent with personal dignity. No wonder the American girl who goes out to service is nearly as extinct as the buffalo! The American girl has the disadvantage of brains. She sees things clearly, directly, without reference to tradition or twaddle. She knows that domestic service, although the best paid, is the most undesirable work she can undertake, because it brings with it none of the human rewards that are better than money. Not one of the considerations which impel girls to choose shop-work, comes in to make her work dignified and in conformity with the laws of human nature. As things are now, if I were a working-girl, as I am an American, I would never go out to service; never, *never*, NEVER!

Why American girls are not in service.

And neither would you, if you were to tell the honest truth.

In a most sincere and convincing paper, in an equally sincere and helpful little book by Ethel Davis, is a paragraph into which is compressed so much truth, historical and so-

ciological, and so much practical good sense, that I want to transcribe it here.

The history which is repeating itself.

"From the eighth to the fourteenth century men grappled with these same difficulties in the relations between the nobility and the trades, beginning the struggle a thousand years before women are ready to acknowledge that such difficulties have a right to exist. In the time of Charlemagne every noble of importance had within his personal control artisans of all trades needed to supply his daily wants. Each château was a miniature city, within the precincts of which dwelt armorers, carriage-builders, saddlers, spinners, carpenters, and other laborers. Many of the relations between these workers and the seigniors who protected, controlled, and supported them in exchange for their services, were the same as between the household servants and their employers of to-day, and the desire for personal freedom and the opportunity to develop their individuality grew fierce and bitter on the part of the artisans. In those feudal surroundings the power of the nobility was

strong, and the fight for freedom which was begun at that time lasted six hundred years. Through the clever use of the one liberty that these workmen possessed—that of choosing their own masters—and the organizing of guilds, they slowly won their personal independence in spite of the powerful resistance of the nobility. Besides the arguments of arms and oppression, they had to fight those we now hear advanced in favor of the condition of domestic service. They could have better homes, better protection, and the assistance of the class in power, if they remained in the château. They preferred hunger, oppression, and suffering with the freedom to struggle for a position that would secure to their children or their children's children the precious right to the 'pursuit of happiness.'"

The pursuit of happiness.

Out of this, as we think of it, emerges this truth: We women have been wearying ourselves in the rush after a superficial knowledge of many things, and particularly of the subjects that have specially engaged the attention of men, in order that we might

become their political peers and reform their political abuses. Yet in the management of the one kingdom that has been ours from the beginning, we are harking back to the Middle Ages and the institutions which modern society cast aside long ago. Like the king in the story, our queens want to "go out governing by the day or week," while the kingdom that has always been theirs rests in its primitive state of anarchy and disorganization.

Queens who go out governing.

All the more to be deplored is this condition of affairs, because we are never done talking about it. We have been fond of presenting ourselves (with that taste for martyrdom which most good women possess) as the helpless creatures of a condition already hopeless, and passing on into despair. Yet we have never given the situation the small amount of quiet thought necessary to discover that the solution of the problem lies, not in the endless adjustment and readjustment of personal and sentimental details, but is to be accomplished by the patient, careful study of that political economy and sociology with which we have been

wrestling for the sake of outside reforms. It might appear to a profane observer of the situation, that, until women shall have given evidence of some small political sagacity, some desire for reform, and a very little capacity for organization in that department of the world's sociology with which the home is concerned, there is no glaring injustice in denying them a share in the government of the country.

One reason why women shouldn't vote.

It is not to be denied that the labor problem in the home is peculiarly difficult and complicated, since its conditions vary somewhat with the habits and requirements of each household; but that it is anything more than difficult—that it is unsolvable—I do not for a moment believe. The trouble is that each mistress insists upon looking at it as an aggregation of individual cases, amorphous and meaningless as a snow-bank, instead of understanding that were a few fundamental principles of economics applied, the entire situation would fall into structure and significance.

When I first began to think upon this subject, I found myself settling steadily toward two conclusions: first, that the existing antagonism between mistress and maid had its origin, not in natural ill-will nor in class antagonism, but in wrong economic conditions; second, that the fundamental economic wrong was in the housing of the employed with the employers—with the constant action and reaction of the one class upon the other. After ten years' thinking upon the subject, I still think so. The entire situation must be "hatched over and hatched different," after Mrs. Poyser's radical methods of reform. The housewife is distinctly in competition to-day with other employers of labor. Why not take a leaf out of our enemy's book, and secure for our own employés the advantages that other labor offers? Given this change, nearly all of the advantages claimed by the shop or factory girls for their work would be secured. Working hours would be fixed, and extra work would be paid for. Outside of working hours the girl would have that right to

The beginning of antagonism.

live after her own ideas of happiness, which should be hers as much as ours. She could have that intercourse with her own class which can never be denied to the individual without loss, and, having equal liberty with other classes of workers, she would no longer lose caste.

The right to happiness.

I am not so filled with the new wine of theory as to believe that such readjustment of the family living as would be required by so radical a change in domestic service could be easily brought about. It would require, first of all, careful study and preparation; second, cautious and concerted execution on the part of mistresses; and third, fourth, and fifth, intelligence. But why not make ourselves and our own needs the objects of some of our reformatory and philanthropic zeal for a little while? Why not put this in our list of "Things to be Tried" along with "Municipal Reform" and "Anti-Vivisection" and "Flower Missions" and "Health Protection?" Surely no class of the poor need attention more than the poor mistresses, and no condition of municipal

mismanagement is more notorious or more desperate than the mismanagement of our kitchens.

The advantages of the present.

In many ways the times are ripe for such an experiment. The number of finished products brought daily into our homes, as the result of outside labor, is constantly increasing. No mistress, however conservative and hearth-bound, now disregards the advantage and propriety of having her laundry "done out" and much of her baking brought in. She buys a great deal of the family clothing ready-made, and takes no reproach to herself therefor. She "sends out" for a cook by the hour, and a second waitress for her dinners; perhaps her windows are cleaned, her silver polished, and her bric-à-brac dusted by outsiders. Her charwoman is always an outsider, as is, often, her furnace-man, her gardener, and her coachman. The substitution of gas and electric cooking for the old-fashioned range, by giving us better results with less time and labor, makes the possibility of organizing

domestic labor immeasurably greater. I believe changes can be made by which the cook, the waitress, the nurse, and even the maid-of-all-work may go out of our homes after a fixed number of hours, and be free to live their own lives, while the lighter services of the evening can be provided for, if desired, by a single servant whose days are her own. In the South, the colored house-servants still have their own quarters outside the homes of their employers, just as they did in the days of slavery.

The arrangement in the South.

The following quotation from a letter received very recently from a Southern mistress, may help to make it clear that this arrangement is not regarded by them as altogether unfortunate:

"In the Texas town, our colored cooks all went home at night to their own cabins. There they played the banjo, entertained their friends, held revival services, and sometimes fought among themselves, with a freedom which would not have been possible in the home of the 'white lady,' but which was very essential to their happiness. . . .

My cook never missed coming in the morning to her work for three years, except one day when she was really ill, although she suffered a great deal from her fear of ghosts when she came before daylight in the winter-time. I could keep her over her time when necessary, by giving her a trifle extra and allowing her to provide an escort to see her safely home."

It is not the purpose of this paper to do more than suggest the general lines along which it seems to be profitable to direct our attention. Therefore I have left untouched the innumerable questions and objections which will spring up for discussion—and disagreement—in the mind of every housekeeper who reads this paper. But I believe that I see a great many of the objections, and I do not find them insuperable, nor, indeed, in many cases, nearly so hard of settlement, as the difficulties which are constantly bubbling up out of the uneasy waters now.

A valid objection.

There is, however, one objection sure to suggest itself which does seem very real at

first thought; that is, that servants, in most cases, have no homes to go to, or else the homes are so poor and unhealthful as to make it undesirable that they should come daily into our homes from them. This is perfectly true of the class of foreign or ignorant servants with whom we are at present struggling, but it seems to me altogether practical to believe that the greater desirability of domestic service which would be brought about by putting it on a plane with other labor, would bring into it just the class of intelligent, home-reared girls most to be desired. More than that, if the large serving class in our country were in permanent need of decent, cheap living-quarters, capital would drift that way. A movement in one of the largest working-woman's associations in this country is just now by way of compassing such an end. In this association is a special club, formed only of domestic servants, the purpose of which is both intellectual and social. It has meetings for the discussion of questions relating to their work and their interests, it has organized a mutual

A new investment for capital.

benefit society for the assistance of members who are ill or unemployed, and it is looking forward to the establishment of a respectable, cheap boarding-house for servants, by means of which may be avoided the present crowding of unemployed workers in the unclean and unhealthful tenements that now serve as their retreat when they are not in situations. This disposition on the part of house-workers to organize for themselves, wherever they see the desirability, is very hopeful, and not a little touching, when one stops to reflect upon their slender equipment in training and money.

The National Household Economic Association.

With the organization, some four years ago, of the National Household Economic Association, the greatest encouragement was given that, at last, definite and constructive ideas were to be brought to bear upon the chaos of the situation. And much has been already accomplished. Now if the women's clubs of this country could be led to take up the study and adjustment of the problem, with the sincerity and sagacity and spirit of

co-operation which characterize their work in other ways, in two or three years they would be able to formulate a set of principles for domestic labor that would serve as a solid framework for details.

There have been, it is true, for several years tentative and sporadic organizations of mistresses in different places here and there all over the country; but the attention of these housekeepers' clubs has been mainly directed to the philanthropic side of the question, that is, to the training of servants themselves by means of training-schools. All of which is helpful and hopeful, to be sure, even primarily essential when capacity and intelligence among servants are at their lowest, as they are to-day. But I am by no means certain that such means are anything more than temporary scaffolding by which the main structure is to be helped and upheld. For the true economic principle is that the training and equipment of the employé are his own affairs. Unless the work attracts the worker enough to generate an impulse toward self-preparation, there would

The place of training schools.

seem to be a waste of expenditure in attempts on the part of anyone else to make the path plain and easy. Training-schools of course there must be, else how shall girls receive their training? But they should be, in the end, like the training-schools for nurses, conducted on business principles—not philanthropy. The servants of this country pay annually into the intelligence offices three millions of dollars. It might seem possible to make a training-school something better than a philanthropic institution, if some of this misspent money could be attracted toward a paying investment of adequate self-preparation for their work, on the part of servants.

Work of the Civic Club.

The Social Science section of the famous Civic Club of Philadelphia has recently drawn up and put up in the hands of all its members what it calls "A Standard of Work and Wages in Household Labor," to which standard it is expected that all its members will adhere. For certain wages, ranging from three dollars and a half to four dollars a week, certain definite requirements are

set down, in the case of cooks, waitresses, chambermaids, laundresses, seamstresses, children's nurses, and general houseworkers. For example, a cook asking the wages just specified is required to show a proper knowledge of the sink and drains, the kitchen, cellar, and ice-chest, and the kitchen utensils. She must understand the making of bread, biscuit, muffins, griddle-cakes, soup stock, and plain soup. She must know how to cook meats in the four elemental forms known as broiling, boiling, frying, and roasting, and how to dress and cook poultry and fish, to prepare eggs, oysters, vegetables, fruit (fresh and tinned), tea, coffee, and plain desserts.

Here is something definite for both employer and employé. Instead of leaving everything vague and in the air at the time of employment, it gives the cook an opportunity of finding out precisely what duties go with the situation, and it gives the mistress the right to exact from an unwilling or ill-prepared servant the last letter of the agreement.

A precise definition of duties.

A further provision is made, in case any of the outlines of the "good, plain cook" presented in these requirements are obscured or lacking. The employer agrees to furnish instructions in the points of failure, the employé sharing half the expense of such instructions. All of this seems fair, and definitely helpful, and paves the way to still greater clearness and exactness of understanding.

Work for women's Clubs.

But the final emancipation of both employer and employé, and the settlement of the housekeeping problem, must come through wider and co-operative organization. A single club has only the unit value. Hundreds of women in scores of clubs, all working under the general organization of the National Association, taking up its prescribed course of study and thinking toward the same ends of clarification and reconstruction, with a calm allowance for experiment, selecting carefully and after ample test, such principles as seem to them sound and secure, and rejecting everything that is

unjust; tenacious of their own rights but jealous also of the rights of others—such an organization as this would work amazing advances in an incredibly short time. One small club of this kind was established several years ago in a Western town. After the first winter spent in the study of domestic service and of co-operative housekeeping, the members of the club became convinced that the husband of one of them understood the situation, when he declared they had got hold of the tail of an unusually large and lively idea, and that it would probably afford them mental exercise for some time to come. Whether the club is still in existence I do not know, but this I do know (because one of the leading spirits of the club afterward put the declaration into print), that the longer these women studied this question the more they understood that they "were confronted with a problem having moral and social factors as well as economic ones," and that "this problem was fully as important as interstate commerce, trades-unions, or any of the other questions

Work of one Western club.

which the modern economist puzzles his brains over." Each member of this club became also convinced that "while working with one hand with the service question as it now is, she must make ready with the other for a change more radical than anything that housekeeping has known for centuries."

Radical changes impending.

Now, it seems fairly clear to me that preparation for changes so fundamental and so sweeping as the problem requires must come from the informed and thinking side—that is, from the mistresses. In a certain blind, groping way the domestic workers are trying to work out the situation for themselves; as I have said, they organize when and where they can, and when they cannot organize, they still manifest, by the very resentment and intolerance which are the chief burdens the mistress has to bear, an under-sense of something that must be adjusted. But the remedy lies deeper than their minds are able to go; in that the flaw is economic and is only to be apprehended and remedied through the application of economic and sociological

laws, the minds that are best able to apply them must develop them.

Training the mistresses,

One underlying trouble is that in many cases the mistress herself is so ill-informed as to the details of the work she sets about superintending. I thoroughly believe with Miss Griswold (in her recent argument that one way of solving the servant problem is to train the mistresses), that "good mistresses are needed far more than good servants." "It is no wonder," she says, "that our women take little pleasure in what they do so badly, and grow weary and disheartened when wrestling daily with a problem they cannot solve. But let them once take a more serious view of their household duties, and be better trained for them, and housekeeping will cease to be the trial and bugbear it now is. They will find an interest and pleasure in their work such as they had never known before."

To understand the work at first hand.

Without a fundamental knowledge of the working and the needs of each department of household industry, how are women to undertake that systematic instruction of ser-

vants which is a necessity nowadays in every well-ordered home? and, more than all, how are they to evolve the great general sociological principles that underlie, and are at present quite buried by, the mass of confusing details?

It seems strange enough that we women do not realize the tremendous gain there would be to ourselves in taking hold of this problem with concerted determination to get at some solution of it. "Besides being aware," as Miss Griswold says, "of efficiently fulfilling our destinies (and I believe our moral satisfaction in this knowledge would do our nerves more good than the rest-cure) we should be free in a well-ordered household from many of the petty annoyances caused by the shortcomings of ill-trained servants, the countless worries and complications that beset us would be lessened, and we should have more strength and more time for other occupations."

And if it *should* happen that by a little patient, humble, faithful study of this neglected subject we women were to find in its

development an antidote for the ambitious superficiality of our intellectual tastes, and a conviction that it might be as well, after all, to plant our first laurels by our own fireside—why that, too, might be something of a gain.

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